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We had the gondola all to ourselves, except for our driver, Adamo. Jeffrey thought it amusing to harmonize. Adamo agreed. I was less sure.

The tiled roofs on these country houses share the colors of the wine we have been sampling in the Vintage Room.



On the terrazzo of a majestic hotel, a newlywed couple is taking their wedding photos. Front row seats. Love is the most splendid show.

Alberta, our head server at Prego, will insist I order my favorite Beef Carpaccio. But after sampling Italian meats for the day, I'm definitely in the mood for seafood!



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NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELER

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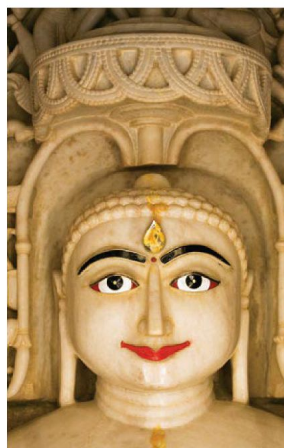
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OVERLOOKING
LISBON, PORTUGAL,
BY ANDREAS HUB/
LAIF/REDUX



The 16th-century
Tower of Belém in
Lisbon, Portugal

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World legacy: Cuba cityscape (far left), monks in Cambodia (above), scenery in Italy (below), Indian religious icon (left).



Excellence Has Its Awards

IN THE 1980S, ECOTOURISM—driven by a deep conservation and environmental ethic—focused on remote jungle lodges, nature treks, and the like. It was well-meaning and maybe appropriate to the time, but dwelled on the fringes of a largely uninterested mainstream travel industry. At *Traveler* we observed this and felt a broader approach, around sustainable tourism, would prove a more powerful force to improve travelers' interactions with the planet and push the entire industry to take notice. Our own sustainable-travel initiatives promoted cultural and natural preservation as well as the thoughtful involvement of travelers and local communities in caring for destinations. In 2002, *Traveler* conceived and launched the World Legacy Awards to recognize work in the field, in partnership with Conservation International. We were ahead of our time; there wasn't much support for, nor understanding of, the importance of sustainable travel practices.

We believe more than ever that the right kind of tourism can help manage a rising tide of travelers. We therefore have relaunched an improved World Legacy Awards.

Last year, the globe surpassed one billion international travelers, and the number is climbing. We believe more than ever that the right kind of tourism will help manage any potential negative impact of this rising travel tide.

"What if we rededicate ourselves to better educate travelers to explore and protect the planet?" *Traveler* Editor at Large Costas Christ asked us. "To identify visionaries who are developing enlightened approaches to travel that will motivate the industry to change at a faster pace?" So we've relaunched an improved, updated World Legacy Awards, in partnership with ITB Berlin, the world's largest gathering of travel professionals. The winners, in five categories, will be announced in Berlin in March 2015 and in the pages of our April 2015 issue. To learn more, log on to www.nationalgeographic.com/worldlegacyawards.

— KEITH BELLOWES

OUR MISSION

National Geographic Traveler reports on destinations of distinction and character, and supports efforts to keep them that way—believing that to enhance an authentic sense of place will benefit both travelers and the locations they visit. For more information, visit travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/sustainable.

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At the heart of the image™



JANELLE NANOS
WRITER, "EXPLORERS CLUB,"
PAGE 48

HOME: I live in Cambridge, a mile from Harvard Square. As a convergence of great minds, the Boston area is an endless source for stories.

RUNNER'S HIGH: I'm an editor for *Boston Magazine*, and the office is only a few blocks from the finish line of the Boston Marathon. I had been down there just an hour before the blasts went off in 2013. So when I got the chance to run the race this year, it seemed I didn't have a choice, though training here means weeks of long, freezing winter runs along the Charles River. On race day, I got choked up at the sight of the Citgo sign; the finish line was a spectacular celebration of the strength of a city.

LOVE NOTES: I started to fall in love with my husband in college, while he was studying abroad in Italy and sending me travel missives. We've become adept travel companions because we balance each other. He hates getting lost, while I consider a wrong turn an adventure. But he's the one who gets me to the airport on time. I'd get nowhere without him.



RUSSELL SHORTO
WRITER, MY CITY: "PAST FORWARD AMSTERDAM," PAGE 22

HOME: I lived in Amsterdam for six years. From there I wrote a history of the city and reported on Europe for the *New York Times Magazine*. My next book, a narrative history of the American Revolution, has brought me to Cumberland, Maryland.

SPIN CYCLE: In Amsterdam, I went everywhere by bike, which changes the pace of daily life. You see people carrying everything on bicycles—including other bicycles.

TALE OF TWO CITIES: New York has a lot of Amsterdam's genes in it. Words like "stoop" (from the Dutch for "little porch") are used mostly in and around New York. Place names, of course, reflect Dutch roots: Amsterdam Avenue, Harlem. New York and Amsterdam are both outward-looking in sensibility, with immigrant populations. But New York is, like, 12 times the size with about 50 times the noise and hassle.

GOING DUTCH: The town of Haarlem is a sweet little cosmopolitan medieval center. And I love riding a bicycle up the Amstel River from Amsterdam to the town of Ouderkerk, where there are nice cafés right on the water. After cycling on a sunny day, we would get goat cheese salads or an *uitsmijter*—egg/bacon platter—and drink rosé wine or Heineken.

DAISANN McLANE

WRITER, "SAVING OLD BANGKOK," PAGE 36

HOME: I split my year between the two greatest big cities in the world, Hong Kong and New York. As my Asia base, Hong Kong is equal parts practicality and passion. I can walk out my door, ride the world's longest escalator, and hop on the 23-minute Airport Express Train.

DIM YUM: Hong Kong is the Paris of Chinese food. I told a top restaurant critic from Chicago that once I took him to dim sum here, he'd never be satisfied in Chinatown again. He was skeptical, but after he bit into a crispy skin pork bun, we had him for life.

COMEBACK KID: Bangkok is like a fascinating puzzle where even a seemingly mundane scrawl on a taxi's roof, or the color of a T-shirt, can hold hidden meaning. For someone like me who loves decoding the intricacies of culture and society, the city is irresistible. That's why I've returned so many times—probably 40 or 50 trips.

FACE TIME: In 2009, I started offering culture and food walks in Hong Kong. As a writer I seldom get to meet my readers, so the people-to-people contact has been particularly rewarding.



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Swiss guards line the annual military pilgrimage to Lourdes, France.

“I also travel to learn and believe that we should travel not to escape life—but so life does not escape us.”

—SARA CHUKOIAN ON “OCEAN HERO ENRIC SALA” (ONLINE)

MIND OVER MATTER An article on our Intelligent Travel blog, called “Four Paths to Happier Travel,” probed the topics of meditation and mindfulness while traveling. “As a frequent business traveler, I find meditation a real help in stressful airport situations,” wrote Melanie Bernstein of **Washington, D.C.** “When I’m annoyed by a crying baby on the plane, I find that wishing the baby happiness has a way of banishing my irritation.”

Reader Claire Algarme of the **Philippines** chimed in with her own path to peace: “I want to savor the moment and take in everything around me while traveling, so I try to wait until later to upload photos or blog about my experiences.”

Solidarity in Motion

TALK TO US

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IN “OVER THERE” (May 2014), writer Ceil Miller Bouchet traveled to Lorraine, France, to pay homage to its World War I heritage and discover the lasting effects on this borderland. That theme of remembrance struck a chord with retired soldier Mary Dassau of **Hope Mills, N.C.**, who shared her tradition to commemorate France’s sacrifices in another world war, in another corner of the country, at the International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes. Dassau explained: “This pilgrimage is attended by thousands of soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, police officers, and firefighters from more than 35 countries. It is a wonderful, spiritual experience, as well as being a lot of fun. This year will mark my seventh trip.”

TRIP ADVISING Our annual roundup of the world’s top guided trips always stokes wanderlust, and “50 Tours of a Lifetime” (May 2014) got readers dreaming of the volcanoes of Nicaragua, Venice by kayak, and more. “There is

something on this list for everyone, no matter what your style of travel,” wrote Kraig Becker on the Adventure Blog. “While the specific suggestions may not always be friendly to our bank accounts, they are good launching points to hatch ideas for options that are.”

NICE SERVE Do-gooding traveler Shannon O’Donnell, who was featured in the November 2013 issue as one of our “Travelers of the Year,” recently wrote “DIY Voluntourism: A Manifesto” for our Intelligent Travel blog. Her approach to serving the world resonated with like-minded travelers such as reader Tam Warner Minton of **Dallas, Tex.** “I, too, have participated in global volunteer projects, from Tofo, Mozambique, to do fish surveys and photograph whale sharks, to Thailand to feed elephants; in September, I’ll be taking ID photos of manta rays in Ecuador,” she wrote. “People can enrich their lives by giving back, but especially by learning the importance of the issues around them.”



EDITING IN THE MIST

Minneapolis reader Sydney Fencil corrected a beastly headline error in “Tours of a Lifetime” (May 2014): “Dian Fossey studied gorillas [above] in Rwanda; Jane Goodall studied chimpanzees in Tanzania. Both pioneering women deserve to be recognized accurately.”



A cyclist tackles a trail near Whitefish, Montana.

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE

A Montana for All Seasons

Anyone who thinks the Big Sky state is all dude ranches and geysers has probably never gone on a llama trek, hunted for huckleberries, or helped polish off a 50-foot-long strawberry shortcake there. Find those and other insider favorites at “Where the Locals Go: Montana,” a digital hub of photo galleries, editor picks, and reader suggestions on how best to explore this vast state year-round. Follow National Geographic photographers as they capture the changing of seasons at OnAssignment.NationalGeographic.com.

■ NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.COM/LOCAL-MONTANA



EXPEDITIONS

BON VOYAGE, BON APPÉTIT: CULINARY TRIPS WITH BITE

Feed your travel appetite on new farm-to-table trips by National Geographic Expeditions. Travelers dig into the world's richest food heritages on “Joys of the Italian Table” and “Tastes of Provence and the Riviera,” whether exploring a produce market in Italy (left) or taking a cooking class from a French chef. The experiences are filled with cultural immersions, regional flavors (from lavender to Chianti), and also food for thought about the origins of culinary traditions and the sustainability of local ingredients.

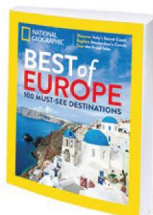
■ NGEXPEDITIONS.COM/CULINARYTRIPS

ON NEWSSTANDS

New Grand Tour: Europe's Top 100

Paris's Champs-Élysées and Moscow's Bolshoi Ballet. Norway's fjords and Scotland's coast. Antwerp's waffles and Reykjavík's hot dogs. A new special issue of *National Geographic* distills the essence of Europe with 100 high points of its cities, wildernesses, wonders, and paradises.

■ ON SALE JULY 15



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9th Annual Hawaii Fishing and Seafood Festival

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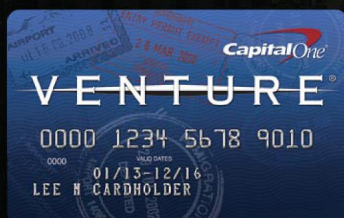
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WHERE TO GO NOW

BEST OF THE WORLD

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A toast to
Denver's Lower
Downtown
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A typical whitewashed windmill on the Greek island of Ios

Circling Back to the Cyclades

AS A NEW generation of Greeks reclaim their heritage, they're looking past overtouristed islands like Mykonos to quiet stunners such as Ios. Reachable only by boat (including a daily ferry from Santorini), this 42-square-mile island in the Cyclades archipelago largely retains its traditional way of life. Shepherds guide flocks through the fertile valley of Epano Kampos and along mountain footpaths. Its oldest archaeological site, Skarkos, dates from the third millennium B.C., and the 16th-century monastery of Pyrgos sits below the island's highest peak. Dirt tracks lead to more than two dozen pristine beaches, which veteran philhellenes call some of the finest strands in the Aegean. "We saw what happened to other Greek

islands transformed by overdevelopment. We're determined to save Ios from that fate," says Vassiliki Petridou, president of Luxurios Island Experience, a local eco-resort company. In the only town on the island, Chora (a hippie haven during the 1970s), guests stay in laid-back lodgings ranging from the chic new Agalia Suites, a 14-room boutique hotel, to family-run guesthouses on narrow stone walkways. Tavernas serve grilled squid, *horta* (wild greens), and local wine. Even when backpackers descend in August, nature reigns supreme across the island—much as it did in Homer's time. —COSTAS CHRIST

■ TIP: SIP PLOMARI OUZO AT FREE BAR ON MYLOPOTAS BEACH, A ONETIME HIPPIE HANGOUT THAT STILL DRAWS WANDERERS.

ATLAS

Ios Island, Greece



Second-century writings claim Ios as the final resting place of Homer; followers visit his (unverified) tomb at the island's northern tip.

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The Denver Bike Bar takes pedal-powered parties through Lower Downtown.

Full Steam Ahead for Downtown Denver

AT THE BEGINNING of the 20th century, Denver's Union Station hummed with the brisk comings and goings of a capital on the rise. This summer the landmark reclaims its place as a transit and social hub for the city. Part of a nine-block, \$500 million face-lift, the renovated beaux arts depot signals the 21st-century arrival of Lower Downtown ("LoDo"), an urban success story that began in the 1980s when the Oxford Hotel reopened and start-up Wynkoop Brewing Company took a chance on the onetime red-light district. Today's Union Station pays homage to that frontier spirit as a showcase for Colorado craftsmanship, with 400-plus artworks and local beer taps, pouring behind the original ticket counter at the Terminal Bar. Elsewhere

at the depot, rising chefs show influences from near and far: Alex Seidel plates ingredient-driven cuisine alongside a market stocked with goods from his nearby ten-acre farm, and Jennifer Jasinski preps daily arrivals of oysters and sea urchins. Outside the station, Lower Downtown continues to buzz at breweries such as Great Divide and vanguard tap house Falling Rock. "I had a friend who used to call Denver the 'locker room' of the Rockies," says Dana Crawford, Denver's famed preservationist and namesake of Union Station's new 112-room hotel. "That's just not true anymore." —STEPHEN EDWARDS

■ **TIP: VISIT THE SOUTH CORRIDOR'S DISPLAY OF LOST TRINKETS, FROM LUGGAGE TICKETS TO LORETTA YOUNG TRADING CARDS.**

ATLAS

Denver, Colorado



Before becoming Colorado's governor, geologist John Hickenlooper founded the state's first brewpub, Wynkoop Brewing.



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Sunset over Ljubljana, Slovenia, from Castle Hill

Slovenia's Ancient Roman Holiday

IN THE 2,000 years since Caesar Augustus laid one of Ljubljana's first stones, then for a settlement called Emona, this city has often hidden in plain sight. No longer: As Slovenia's capital cheers its bimillenary throughout 2014, it's putting its treasures on parade. Emonan daily life and ancient artifacts take the spotlight at the City Museum of Ljubljana and National Museum of Slovenia, and the summer's marquee festival—Ave, Emona (“Hello” in Latin; August 22-24)—takes over Congress Square with military and civic reenactments. Meanwhile, Ljubljana's modern renaissance plays out a few blocks away along the Ljubljanica River. An award-winning reinvigoration of its banks sparked efforts to also bring back the gleam of the

baroque facades of Old Town. At cafés, restaurants, and wine bars serving seasonal ingredients and prized wines from the countryside, convivial crowds overflow onto cobblestoned walkways and squares. Eastern Europe's pocket-size surprise remains free of major hotel chains, and a dozen boutique hotels, including the hip Hotel Cubo and swanky Vander Urbani Resort, have in recent years infused modern design into historic structures. “Ljubljana is just small enough that you know everybody,” says Cubo's general manager, Sandi Kovačević, “but big enough to get lost.” —STEPHEN EDWARDS

■ **TIP: GLIMPSE THE ARCHITECTURAL LEGACY OF NATIVE SON JOŽE PLEČNIK (1872-1957)—LJUBLJANA'S GAUDÍ—ON A WALKING TOUR.**

ATLAS

Ljubljana, Slovenia



The city emblem—a dragon—has roots in a Greek legend, which holds that Jason and the Argonauts battled one here.



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Costas Christ
World Legacy Awards Chairman
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The country music circle remains unbroken in Appalachia's Bristol.



Before Nashville, There Was Bristol

WHEN THE BIRTHPLACE of Country Music opens in August, the Smithsonian-affiliated museum lets the world in on a secret musicians have known for generations: The roots of American music run deep in Bristol, a onetime Appalachian railroad boomtown straddling the Tennessee-Virginia border. Johnny Cash famously called Bristol's studio sessions of 1927 "the single most important event in the history of country music," as they marked the first recordings of some of the genre's earliest stars, including the Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers. A similar refrain blares loud and clear throughout the museum. The "Wayback Machine" and listening stations trace Bristol's history and the transformation of America's recording

industry, including technology innovations such as the Victor Talking Machine, while an in-house FM radio station and theater host performances (to say nothing of the sounds emanating from the sing- and yodel-along booth). Indeed, country music never left Bristol: Live music happens most nights and around almost every bend of the region's 333-mile Crooked Road, aka Virginia's Heritage Music Trail, which runs through downtown. On Saturday nights at the nearby Carter Family Fold, the first family of country music still welcomes all comers for concerts and clogging around the dance floor. —MARYELLEN DUCKETT

■ TIP: FLATFOOT OVER TO THE BRISTOL RHYTHM & ROOTS REUNION (SEPTEMBER 19-21) FOR BLUEGRASS, PIEDMONT BLUES, AND MORE.

ATLAS

Bristol, Virginia/Tennessee



The Birthplace of Country Music occupies a 1920s car dealership where, rumor has it, Jack Dempsey once boxed.

MICHAEL HANSON/INTERNATIONAL MAPPING

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01

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NAVIGATING THE GLOBE

SMART TRAVELER

Rembrandt's
"Night Watch" at
the Rijksmuseum
in Amsterdam

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MY CITY

Past Forward Amsterdam

THE ANYTHING-GOES DUTCH CAPITAL HAS A HEALTHY HOLD ON HERITAGE By RUSSELL SHORTO

MY FOUR-YEAR-OLD son loves going to the park in our Amsterdam neighborhood. The trip takes a minute. We cross the street, walk to the corner, and there it is: the vast green sward called Museumplein. Some of the world's great cultural institutions (Rijksmuseum, Van Gogh Museum) border the square, but Anthony heads straight for his "playground," a brushed steel platform in the middle. Its circle of gleaming panels is perfect for hide-and-seek. Anthony remains properly unaware

that this is in fact a memorial to women who died in Ravensbrück concentration camp during World War II.

This way of juxtaposing life and death, renewal and remembrance, is exactly appropriate to the experience of urban living. Amsterdam is a city exquisitely built with human needs and concerns in mind, and blending the past into the present is one of the many things it does well.

Amsterdammers like to think of their city as a cosmopolitan village. It

has only 811,000 inhabitants, far fewer than some other European capitals, and somehow it feels even smaller. The skyline is human-scaled: The three-story canal house is the standard structure.

I give friends tours of the city by way of the neighborhoods I've lived in, starting in the center, within the 17th-century canal ring. The area is as quaint as you can get, yet it's rescued from kitsch by Amsterdam's permissive policies (you can be only so quaint with weed-selling coffee shops and prostitute

Cyclists rule along the Prinsengracht, one of Amsterdam's three main canals.



Did you know a group of sea turtles is called a *bale*?

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The In 't Aepjen pub is housed in a 16th-century building. Below: at Hester van Eeghen's shop

windows around the corner). I hadn't resided in the center very long before I began skirting the tourist haunts in favor of places where I could live my life. Spui Square is rimmed with great bookshops (Athenaeum is classical and stately; the American Book Center a vigorous hodgepodge). Not far away, on Noordermarkt square, chic Bordewijk, my favorite restaurant in the city, serves suckling pig, with views of a church where Vincent van Gogh sought solace during his time in Amsterdam.

Later I lived in Zeeburg, in the windy, watery east, which recalls the city's connections to the sea. The best way to see it is by boat. A 17th-century windmill dominates the area; I once sailed up to it in a friend's boat and stepped directly into a microbrewery, called Brouwerij 't IJ, which is

■ GO TO INTELLIGENTTRAVEL.NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.COM FOR "I HEART MY CITY" POSTS.

next to the mill. A little further sailing brought me to my home on Borneo Island. Occasionally from my window I would see architecture students boating in on group tours; at the far end of the island is a little strip of water lined by rows of high-tech canal houses, ultramodern riffs on the canal house of the Dutch golden age.

Finally, I moved to Oud-Zuid—"old south"—just outside



the center. Museumplein, where Anthony and I play, is the centerpiece of the neighborhood, but behind the museums and designer shops are quiet streets and snug cafés (I make regular weekend lunch stops at Willems, a French-Dutch eatery).

Standing out amid the residential streets of the neighborhood, the modernist Hilton hotel gained fame as the place where John Lennon and Yoko Ono held a "bed-in for peace" in 1969. That event cemented Amsterdam's reputation for flamboyance and liberalism. Yet few people know that the city's infamous permissiveness comes out of the same commitment that keeps its buildings low and its monuments humble: a determination to give space to the individual.

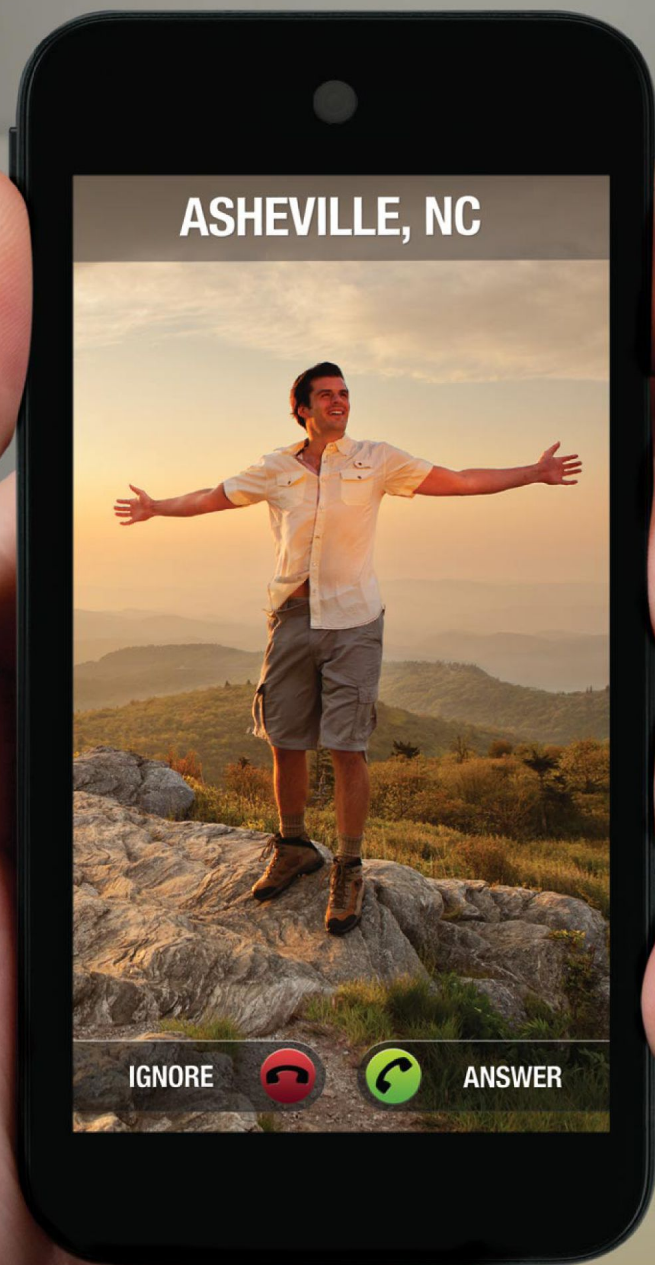
RUSSELL SHORTO is the author of *Amsterdam: A History of the World's Most Liberal City*.

ATLAS

Amsterdam, Netherlands



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STRANGE PLANET

BEARING WITNESS Americans no longer need to visit wilderness areas to see bears. Reports of the furry panhandlers wandering into urban areas have risen. In Florida, bear encounters jumped 47 percent between 2010 and 2012.

BOGGED DOWN Every August, competitors in the World Bog Snorkeling Championship flipper their way to glory in a water-filled trench cut into a peat bog outside the tiny Welsh town of Llanwrtyd Wells. **STILL GOIN'** Chugging along since 1835, the St. Charles Avenue streetcar line linking downtown New Orleans and the historic Carrollton neighborhood is America's oldest continuously operating street railway. **NO PULL** Ringing church bells by hand is a dying art—even in Rome, where electric motors now power most bells, including those in St. Peter's Basilica. **POLAR EXPRESS** Flying low, Qantas Airways day tours over Antarctica give spectacular views of Earth's coldest, windiest, and driest continent. **SLEEPY TIME** Residents of Shanghai began wearing pajamas in public in the late 1970s, partly for convenience but also because they felt the Western sleepwear represented fashion. —Paul Martin

ADVENTURE 101

Soaring Over the Dunes

HANG GLIDE ON NORTH CAROLINA'S OUTER BANKS By JOHN BRILEY

THERE'S A REASON that the Wright brothers picked the Outer Banks to take their first flight: reliable breezes, wide open, non-vegetated spaces, and 100-foot dunes—the tallest on the Atlantic coast—where even novices can fly safely before alighting in soft sand. Your first flight in a hang glider “might just change your life,” says Andy Torrington, who has been teaching the sport near Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, since 1991. “It feels as if people are trying to lift you off the ground by your belt, and within seconds they have succeeded. Then you're weightless, soaring as you do in flying dreams.”

GETTING STARTED

First-timers need only enough fitness to walk up the dunes five times and an ability to follow instructions, says Torrington, whose employer, Kitty Hawk Kites, has been giving lessons in the 420-acre Jockey's Ridge State Park on the Outer Banks for 40 years. “Just bring an open mind,” Torrington says. “You don't even need shoes: It's easier to run barefoot in the sand.”

TAKING FLIGHT

Class starts with 45 minutes of ground instruction, after which groups of up to five students ascend the sandy hill and buckle into a harness integrated into the glider; the frame is aluminum, the wings Dacron, and the connective bolts and wires aircraft-grade. “Then you start running,” Torrington says. Within a few steps you're airborne, following the contour of the dune as an instructor runs alongside shouting instructions, chiefly which way to push the steering bar to maximize flight time. At this point, “be as relaxed as possible,” says Torrington.

First-day fliers typically get five to 15 off-the-ground runs and soar 125 feet forward, “farther than the Wright brothers did on their first flight.” Three-hour lessons are \$109.



Bodie Island Lighthouse

MORE FLYING SPOTS

Draper, Utah Consistent, smooth winds grace Point of the Mountain flight park, yielding hours-long flights. **Torrey Pines, California** Stunning Pacific views and award-winning instructors make Torrey Pines Gliderport ideal for beginners.



Taking off at Jockey's Ridge State Park

FEAR FACTOR

Torrington stresses that hang gliding is safer than its death-wish reputation suggests: “We teach more than 8,000 students a year, from ages 4 to 92, and the most common injury is a tweaked hamstring, from people running too fast at takeoff.”

WHEN TO GO

Summer is the busy season, but better flying conditions—a steady breeze from the east—prevail in spring and fall. The nearest major airport is in Norfolk, Virginia, 80 miles north.

The Outer Banks offers a chill vibe and plenty of outdoor fun, from calm-water kayaking to surfing, fishing, golfing, and some of the East Coast's nicest big-wave beaches. Torrington recommends the nameless sound-side shore along the western border of Jockey's Ridge State Park, and the miles of often deserted beach on Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge, 20 miles south.

ATLAS

Outer Banks, North Carolina



The Wright brothers actually made their first flight from Kill Devil Hills, four miles south of Kitty Hawk. After the flight, they sent a telegram from Kitty Hawk, and the dateline stuck.



work. You have to budget time for random wandering.

LENS CRAFTING Finding focus is about being in an open frame of mind. Try to walk around a new place by yourself. As soon as you're with somebody else, inevitably the conversation will turn to something other than what you're doing at that exact time—say, what you had for dinner—and you're not having the fullest possible experience. You need to be in the moment, observing.

(NON)STOP MOTION When I went to Burma 20 years ago, it was so insular, it felt like going back in time. India has opened up, too, with cellphones everywhere. Highways have improved. Every man on the street used to wear a turban; now you see more baseball caps. Regional differences in customs and dress are coming to an end. Yet there are still surprises—that's the delight of being alive. The world evolves. Change is a force of nature.

DOLCE VITA If there were one country—the last or the first—to visit, there's no place like Italy, with its art and style, its food and wine, its landscape, its layers of history. Umbria is a great microcosm of the country, similar to Tuscany but less visited. If I could be anywhere, I would be wandering through the Cinecittà studio in Rome—a fascinating piece of Italian film history—or just walking through Trastevere.

FLASH MOB You can't lament the fact that you're going to share an experience like the Trevi Fountain with several hundred other tourists. You have to make the best out of the situation.

VIEWFINDER After years off the beaten track, I don't see much distinction between a hotel in Seattle and the alleyways of Lhasa, or Ethiopia, or the Pantanal in Brazil. I see more interconnectedness than separation.

EXPLORER

The World in a Flash

BEHIND THE LENS WITH A PHOTO LEGEND By KATIE KNOROVSKY

THROUGH THE EYES of Steve McCurry, a camera has telescopic powers. His pictures reflect the essence of the world's most elusive cultures. In the 1980s—disguised in native garb and armed with a bag of film—he delved deep into Soviet-occupied Afghanistan. Along the way he captured the portrait of Sharbat Gula, a green-eyed refugee girl who became a global icon after appearing on a cover of *National Geographic*. In the decades since,

McCurry has documented conflict zones such as Beirut and Tibet and explored endless frontiers, from Italy to Myanmar (Burma) and India (where he has traveled at least 80 times). Here he shares his angle on the nomadic life:

CANDID CAMERA Travel has to be a free flow—an improvised voyage to discovery. Getting into a routine kills serendipity, and travel becomes too much like

That's a wrap: Steve McCurry mugs for the camera in Kabul, Afghanistan.



Beefeater at the Tower of London

FIRST PERSON

A BRILLIANT DAY IN LONDON

Despite its size, London is a very kid-friendly city. Almost 40 percent of the capital is dedicated to parks and public spaces, and major museums are free. The only problem is there's so much to see. For a dizzying overview of all the attractions, take the elevator to the top of the **SHARD** (below). At 1,004 feet, it's the tallest building in western Europe. On a clear day, the views from the glass-walled 72nd floor can stretch for 40 miles. (Don't prebook; wait for a sunny day and be prepared to line up; \$50.)



TRAVELING WITH KIDS

Royal Romps on the Thames

WHAT TO DO IN AND AROUND LONDON By RACHEL HOWARD

PLACE	THE SCOOP	WHAT TO DO
Tower of London	Thirty-seven Beefeaters and their families share this medieval fortress with eight ravens, several ghosts, and glittering collections of jewels and armor.	Tours by Beefeaters combine spooky stories with witty banter ("It's great living in a palace until you try to order a takeaway"). Creepier still are the winter Twilight Tours.
Hampton Court Palace	Henry VIII amassed over 60 houses, but his favorite retreat from the city was Hampton Court Palace, where he entertained his six wives (until divorcing or beheading them).	Play hide-and-seek in the U.K.'s oldest (17th-century) surviving maze, whose 7-foot-high hedged pathways lead to false routes and dead ends.
Kensington Palace	William and Kate spent one million pounds renovating their 20-room "apartment," where Prince George is the latest resident. The hoi polloi can explore the sumptuous state rooms through interactive exhibits.	Scale the giant pirate ship in the nearby Princess Diana Memorial playground, then stroll across Hyde Park for fish-and-chips at the lakeside Lido café.

ATLAS

London, England



In Tudor times, 200 staff churned out 600 meals twice a day in the 50-room kitchen at Hampton Court Palace, where 600,000 gallons of ale were consumed annually.

For a closer look at London's landmarks, hop aboard one of **THAMES CLIPPERS'** river boats. You can cruise past all the city's top sights, including the London Eye, Big Ben, St. Paul's Cathedral, and Shakespeare's Globe theater, in an afternoon without paying any admission fees (the family boat ticket covers rides for two adults and three children). From London Bridge City pier, below the Shard, sail west toward Putney, taking in the sights along the way. Walking across the **NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM's** interactive Great Map, kids can act out swashbuckling expeditions using a motion-sensitive tablet. Tour the 19th-century *Cutty Sark*, a British ship used to carry tea around the world. Then pop into the Even Keel Café, located under the *Cutty Sark's* hull, for a slice of chocolate fudge cake. —R.H.

A dramatic landscape photograph of a snow-capped mountain peak, likely Mount Everest, under a clear blue sky. In the foreground, a hiker is silhouetted against the mountain, standing on a rocky outcrop and using a trekking pole. The hiker is wearing a backpack and is positioned on the left side of the frame, looking towards the mountain. The mountain's peak is covered in snow and has a jagged, rocky appearance. The lower slopes of the mountain are covered in dark, rocky terrain with some patches of snow. The overall scene conveys a sense of adventure and exploration.

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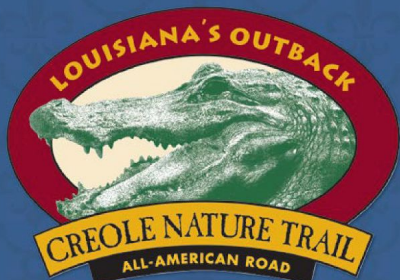
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SMART TRAVELER



A cook grinds basil with a mortar and pestle.

LOCAL FLAVOR

Pesto Perfected in Italy

LIGURIA'S FAMED BASIL SAUCE KEEPS IT SIMPLE By AMANDA RUGGERI

IF THERE IS ONE AROMA that unifies Liguria—the region that arcs along Italy's northwestern coast, joining France to Italy, Alps to sea—it's Genovese basil. Fragrant bouquets of basil line the stalls at outdoor markets and sit in windowsills, wafting a scent as pure as it is intense. And if you ask any locals the one food that showcases their world-famous basil, they won't hesitate to answer: pesto. The leafy, sweet herb is protected by the European Union with DOP (Denominazione di Origine Protetta certification) status—meaning it has to be grown in this region.

The ingredients are few in a traditional pesto Genovese. But they need to be as specific as they are fresh: Parmigiano-Reggiano and Pecorino Sardo cheeses, Tuscan pine nuts, garlic from nearby Vessalico, salt, and extra-virgin oil from the region's Taggiasca olives. And, of course, bright green Genovese

basil. Pesto that's made with other herbs might be tasty. But it's not pesto Genovese. "We're shocked when we see red pesto, or coriander pesto," confesses Sara Di Paolo, director of the Pesto World Championship, which held its fifth edition in Genoa, Italy, in March. "Pesto is green. You need basil and Parmigiano-Reggiano in it to be the real thing."

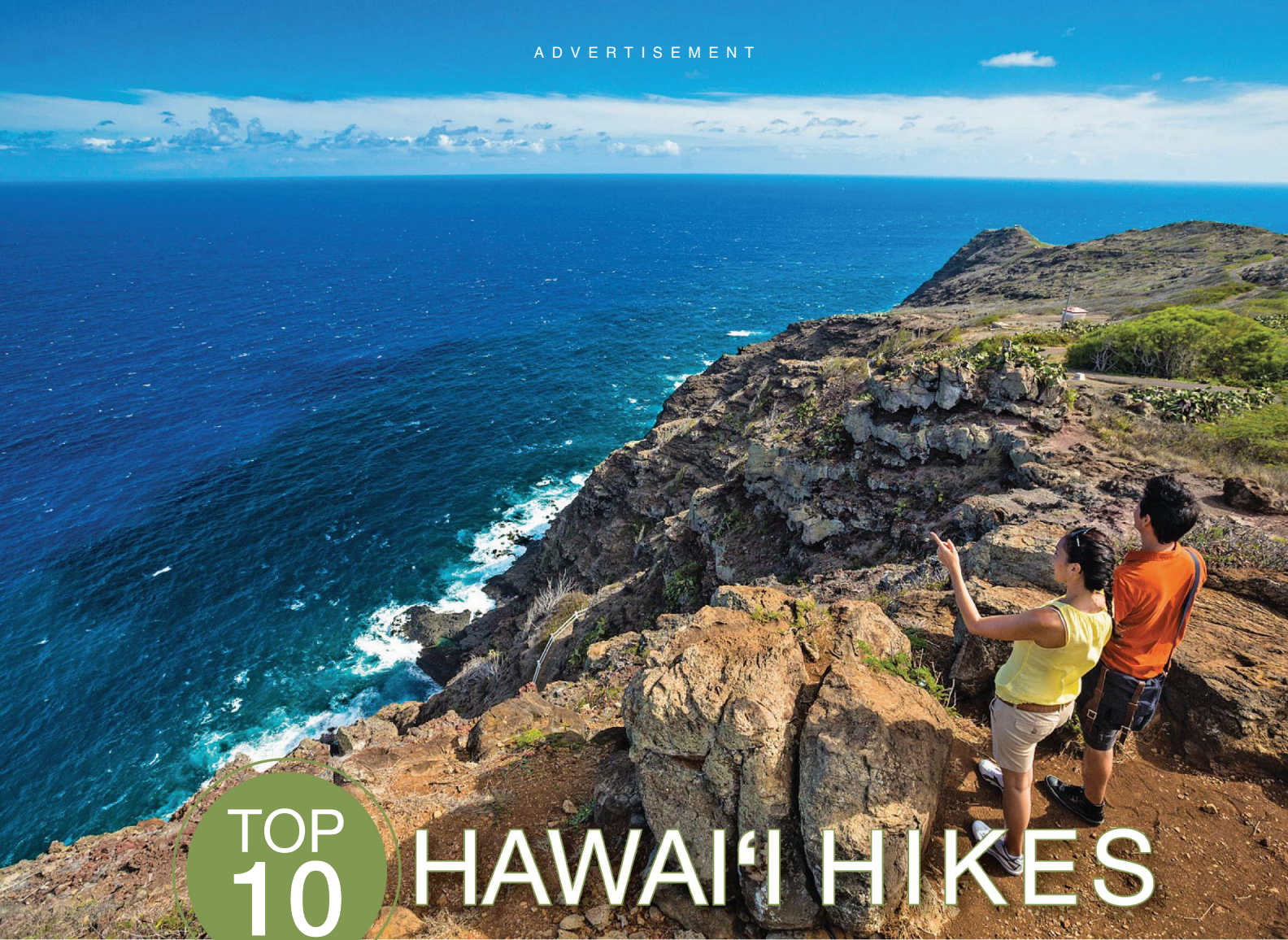
In Liguria, locals add a dollop of pesto to their minestrone soup and slather it on bread. But the most common way to consume it is also the most classic: on pasta—especially *troffie*, or twists, which can hold on to the slippery pesto. Outside of a Ligurian *nonna's* kitchen, one of the best places to try pesto is **Il Genovese**, a 102-year-old restaurant in the heart of Genoa that not only prepares the sauce with the gold standard ingredients—including sea salt from Trapani—but still grinds the basil with a mortar and pestle.

ATLAS

Liguria, Italy



According to local legend, when a woman places a pot of basil outside her door or on her balcony, she is inviting suitors.


 TOP
10

HAWAII HIKES

Calling all hikers: The Aloha State has everything from arduous lava rock treks to lush rain forest routes that lead to waterfall swimming holes. Here, a guide to the best trails in the Hawaiian Islands.

KĪLAUEA IKI TRAIL HAWAII ISLAND

The four-mile Kīlauea Iki Trail in Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park reveals the gorgeous aftermath of a 1959 eruption. The path winds through rain forests along the crater rim and descends 400 feet to the crater floor, which was once a rolling lava lake. Look for Pu'u Pua'i (gushing hill), a cone of cinder and spatter formed by spouting lava fountains, and watch for steam rising from cracks in the crater floor. nps.gov/havo

HALEMAU'U TRAIL MAUI

At Haleakalā National Park, you can go inside the world's third largest volcano. The gorgeous Halemau'u Trail cuts across a surreal mountain-top (which many mistake for a crater), punctuated with red, brown, grey, and black cinder cones. For a day hike, travel six miles until you reach Kawiliinu, an old gas vent decorated with crushed purple lava; the area is one of the quietest places on Earth. nps.gov/hale

PIPIWAI TRAIL MAUI

Situated in the Kīpahulu District of Haleakalā National Park, about 12 miles past the quaint town of Hāna, the four-mile, round-trip Pipiwai Trail winds through tropical foliage and native Hawaiian plants like *kalo*, or taro, and leads to the 200-foot Makahiku Falls and the 400-foot Waimoku Falls (but don't go under either—falling rocks are common). Tip: Keep a sharp eye out for ancient rock walls. nps.gov/hale



MĀNOA FALLS TRAIL O'AHU

Imagine songbirds darting past towering trees, giant ferns with curls as big as your hand, a waterfall that spills into a rock pool—and you'll have the 1.6-mile round-trip Mānoa Falls Trail. Wild and lush—and with a cameo in *Catching Fire* (the sequel film to *The Hunger Games*)—the forest will fool you into thinking you're much farther than only a 15-minute drive from bustling Waikīkī.

hawaiitrails.ehawaii.gov

DIAMOND HEAD STATE MONUMENT O'AHU

If you don't mind stairs (and more than 200 of them), then head to the summit of Lē'ahi, or Diamond Head. Located on O'ahu's south shore, the famous landmark was formed roughly 300,000 years ago by a single volcanic eruption. At the top, a stunning 700-foot panoramic view makes the thigh-cruncher worth it. Fun fact: In the 1800s, British sailors mistook shiny calcite crystals on its slopes for diamonds, hence its modern-day moniker. hawaiiistateparks.org



KUKUI TRAIL KAUAI

To see what some call "the Grand Canyon of the Pacific," visit Waimea Canyon on Kauai's west side. The natural wonder—which measures about 13 miles long, one-and-a-half miles wide, and 2,750 feet deep—has gorgeous eroded cliffs decorated with a palette of earthy colors such as green, orange, and brown. For a challenging trek, take the steep 2.5-mile Kukui Trail to the canyon floor. hawaiiistateparks.org



Photos: Tor Johnson, Hawai'i Tourism Authority (large); Peter Garzke, Hawai'i Tourism Authority (small)



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THE KALALAU TRAIL KAUA'I

With its fluted cliffs, lush valleys, and blue waters, Mother Nature flaunts her best work along Kaua'i's famed Nāpali Coast. Expert hikers should consider the 11-mile, one-way Kalalau Trail—with a series of switchbacks, eroded paths, and sheer drop-offs—to postcard-perfect Kalalau Beach. Camp under the forest canopy and listen to nothing but seabirds and crashing waves. Permits are required for overnight stays and hikes past the six-mile mark. hawaii.stateparks.org

THE MUNRO TRAIL LĀNA'I

Trek to Lāna'i's highest point via the challenging 13-mile Munro Trail. The rugged dirt road travels through a rain forest of native 'ōhi'a lehua and towering Cook Island pines—the latter planted in the early 1900s by George Munro, a naturalist from New Zealand and former manager at Lāna'i Ranch, to attract passing rain clouds. At the 3,370-foot Lāna'ihale summit, see spectacular views of the Pacific, and on a clear day, the islands of O'ahu, Kaho'olawe, Moloka'i, Maui, and Hawai'i Island. go.hawaii.com/lanai

KAMAKOU PRESERVE MOLOKA'I

Kamakou Preserve in the mountains of East Moloka'i, is one of the most intact native forests in Hawai'i and home to more than 200 plant species, such as 'ākala, Hawaiian raspberry, and 'iliihi, Hawaiian sandalwood. A narrow six-inch boardwalk protects the 2,774 acres of habitat, which winds through dense fern-covered rain forests and a thick mountain bog. Contact The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i for its schedule of guided hikes. nature.org

HĀLAWA VALLEY MOLOKA'I

One of the first areas Polynesians settled in Hawai'i was Hālawa Valley, around A.D. 650. For a guided two-mile hike through the fertile landscape, connect with 'Anakala Pilipo Solatorio—the last living native Hawaiian who was born, raised, and still lives in the valley. Solatorio and his family welcome visitors with traditional Hawaiian protocol—blowing of *pū* (conch shell) and *oli* (chant)—before venturing to the 250-foot Mo'oula Falls for a freshwater swim. halawamolokai.com

Photo: Dana Edmunds, Hawai'i Tourism Authority

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PROBLEM SOLVED

The Steep Price of Loyalty

By CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT

Q. With all of the changes to airline frequent-flier programs, are miles still worth collecting? If you fly only a few times a year, you need to seriously question your loyalties. Airline programs are shifting toward revenue-based rewards. Practically speaking, if you want to hit a coveted “elite” level, you don’t just have to fly a certain amount—you also have to spend a certain amount. Frequent-flier expert Tim Winship says it’s part of the airline industry’s efforts to lavish the best perks on its most profitable customers. For the rest of us, who are just trying to get from point A to point B without breaking the bank, frequent-flier programs are significantly less attractive. “You are now better off focusing on price, convenience, and service,” he adds, and making point collection an afterthought. If these program changes wean us from our manic point-collecting habits and force us to think more clearly about our

NEED HELP?

Editor at Large Christopher Elliott is our consumer advocate and author of *How to Be the World’s Smartest Traveler* (National Geographic Books).

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purchasing decisions, then airlines may have done us all a favor.

Q. I lost my passport in Buenos Aires. Now what? Take a deep breath, and know that you’re in good company. Some 300,000 Americans lose their passports or get them stolen every year. First, report the loss to your nearest U.S. Embassy or consulate. Doing so renders it unusable, and then you can apply for a new one. You’ll need a passport photo, an ID, evidence of your U.S. citizenship, a travel itinerary, and a police report if available. By the way, here’s where having a copy of your old passport can help (I use Google Drive or Microsoft OneDrive, so a digital copy is easily accessible from anywhere); it can quickly satisfy many of the requirements. Now all you have to do is wait. It takes between 24 and 48 hours for your emergency passport, which is valid for up to a year. That’s plenty of time to take in a few of the sights in Argentina’s capital.

TRENDING

TOURISTS GONE WILD

By COSTAS CHRIST

In 1979, I was a 21-year-old backpacker who set out in search of paradise. I found it in southern Thailand. Lost on Ko Phangan, I stumbled upon the brilliant sands of Haad Rin, a slice of tropical beauty beyond imagination. I stayed there a month, living off the land. I made a hand-drawn map of its location and vowed never to let the secret out. But others discovered it, and my beach became the site of Thailand’s infamous and raucous Full Moon Party (below). Today Haad Rin represents **TOURISM GONE WRONG**; its sad decline sent me on a lifelong mission to help make tourism right for local people and the planet. Haad Rin is one of four places featured in the new documentary *Gringo Trails* (www.gringotrails.com), by filmmaker/anthropologist Pegi



Haad Rin, Thailand

Vail. She depicts—in sometimes shocking images—the bad, the ugly, and, yes, the good sides of tourism. *Gringo Trails* has been rolling out at film festivals and on college campuses, sparking much needed discussions about what it means to be a traveler. It will begin its theatrical run on September 4 in New York City at Cinema Village. Postscript: I never returned to that beach. But as *Gringo Trails* points out, its fate and the fate of all special destinations rest partly in your hands.

A woman with short black hair and bangs, wearing a blue and white striped t-shirt and black shorts, is sitting barefoot on wooden steps. She is holding an open book and looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The steps are made of dark, weathered wood. Behind her is a doorway with light blue painted wooden frames. The interior of the room behind the door is painted a solid teal color. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting daylight.

SAVING OLD BANGKOK

A NEW COAT OF PAINT AND A NEW LEASE ON LIFE FOR RAMSHACKLE
BUILDINGS TRANSFORMED INTO GUESTHOUSES

Flowers adorn a bath at the Old Bangkok Inn, a new breed of lodge in Thailand's capital city. In the historic district (opposite), daily life keeps a relaxed pace.



BY DAISANN McLANE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SUSAN SEUBERT

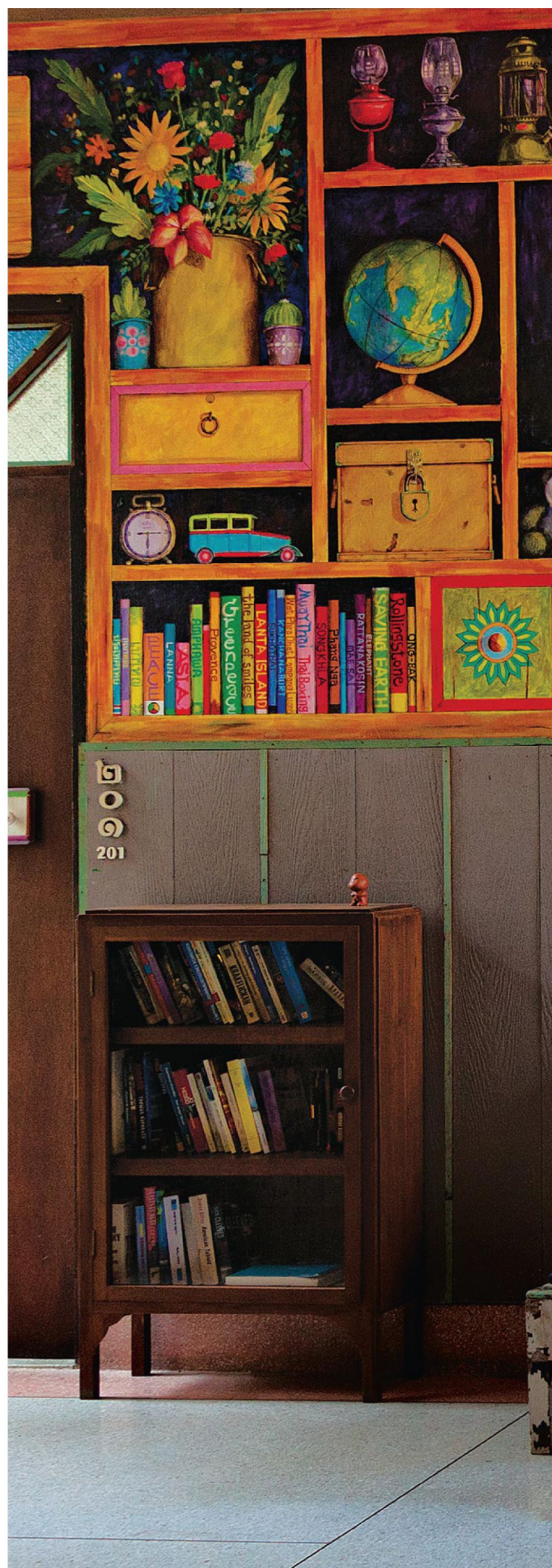
I'M FLOATING THROUGH LIQUID AIR, without a plan, along Samsen Road in Bangkok's old city, a neighborhood of wooden houses, temples, and royal retreats tucked along the banks of the Chao Phraya River. It is April, the dog days just before rainy season, when Bangkok's metropolitan area transforms into a sauna of ten million inhabitants. The heat is seeping up from the pavement, and trickles of sweat creep down the backs of my knees.

Just now I'd kill for a blast of air-conditioning, but the shops here offer no refuge; they're old-fashioned two- and three-story chophouses cooled, sort of, by whirring metal fans. Desperate for a breeze or at least a reasonable imitation of one, I turn toward the river, down a narrow lane called Samsen Soi 5.

That's when I spot the house. It has slatted shutters and a small wooden door, and sits about two feet above street level behind a tangle of trees, vines, and planter pots bursting with palms and philodendrons. Is this an artist's secret Bangkok retreat? Then I notice the wood plaque next to the front door:



A trompe l'oeil mural (right) depicting everything from Winnie the Pooh to a map of Thailand sets a whimsical tone at Phranakorn Nornlen, a small vintage guesthouse in Old Bangkok. Wooden filigree and colored windowpanes brighten a weathered residence (above) in one of Old Bangkok's older neighborhoods.









Party-colored festival decorations (opposite) hang in the Pak Khlong Talad Market, known for its many flower vendors. Boats cruising the Bangkok Noi canal (above), one of the waterways that web the city, pass elevated homes.

Samsen 5 Lodge. My heart leaps—at last, a cool guesthouse in the neighborhood!

Let me explain. For nearly 14 years I've been a repeat visitor to this part of Thailand's capital city, exploring local life in and around Rattanakosin Island, on the eastern bank of the Chao Phraya. This is the original downtown, founded more than 200 years ago; Bangkok's modern center, with its skyscrapers, vast shopping malls, and congested highways, feels a million miles away. It was in this walkable riverine area of old neighborhoods tunneled by spreading banyan trees and sporting melodious-sounding names—Banglamphu, Phra Nakhon, Samsen—that I found a multilayered community of *tout* Bangkok, from Thai royal family members and courtiers to shopkeepers and artisans.

EVERY TRAVELER HAS A SPECIAL PLACE, a home away from home. Old Bangkok is mine. But during all these years, one huge element has been missing for me: a memorable place to stay. Oh, the area has no shortage of boxy, thin-walled guesthouses; Bangkok's (in)famous mecca for backpackers, Khao San Road, is a 15-minute walk to the south. For years I stayed in these bare-bones cheapies, consoling myself with the thought that my visits to Bangkok were made all the richer for my not

being tempted to linger even one extra second in my room.

Still, I always wondered why no one had recognized that these ramshackle but richly local neighborhoods were ripe for discovery. Now, it looks as if someone has.

I walk over to the house, stand on tiptoes, and, peeping in the open window, shout in two languages: "Hello! *Sawasdee ka!*"

No one answers. Down the lane, the faint tinkle of bells emanates from a pushcart. I draw closer to the window, peer inside, and see a tantalizing wonderland of Thai thrift market treasures: farm-style wood benches, Chinese chairs, a dusty pair of jade-color lion figurines, a Victorian clock with hand-painted Chinese characters on the face. The door to one room, ajar, reveals an antique wooden bed with four posts.

I resist the urge to break in and start sleeping; in a few hours I will have to catch my flight home. But for months the mysterious guesthouse lingers in my mind, and not just in a good way. I fret: Does a cool new guesthouse mean the demise of "my" old neighborhood?

"YOU DIDN'T EAT the scrambled eggs yesterday, so I thought you might like a Thai-style breakfast." Startled, I look up to see Worapan Klampaiboon, Samsen 5 Lodge's owner and host, setting a wooden box on the dining table. Inside it sits a steaming bowl of pork and rice soup. "I picked it up from the street vendor where I buy my meals."

Tall and serious, Worapan is so soft-spoken that sometimes I'm unsure whether I've actually heard him say something or

ON THE
IPAD

View more of contributing photographer Susan Seubert's images of Bangkok's guesthouses and neighborhoods.

if he has sent me a telepathic message. He also has an uncanny ability to materialize at my elbow when I think it's just me and my coffee.

"What's on your program for today?" he asks.

Worapan, I discovered when I booked my stay, is an award-winning Thai architect and designer; his firm's office, Super Green Studio, is tucked artfully behind the reception desk. He also is the Johnny Appleseed of the new guesthouse movement in Old Bangkok. Born and raised in this area, Worapan has made its preservation his mission. Four years ago, he rented this unassuming concrete building across from a Buddhist temple and renovated it into a boutique guesthouse to showcase his ideas about sustainable, locally sourced lodging.

"We're trying to integrate tourism with the community," he tells me as I sip my soup. "This is about people and their lives, not just about saving buildings," he explains, adding that before he started renovating the property, "I went around the street, or *soi*, to let the people know what I was doing. I spoke with my neighbors, with the monks in the nearby temple. I wanted everyone to be comfortable with my guests, and I wanted my guests to feel comfortable on the *soi*."

He roots around his office and returns with a map that he drew for his guests highlighting neighbors on Samsen Soi 5. Marked are the best street-food stalls, an eccentric coffee shop where patrons share seating with piles of teddy bears, an outdoor Muay Thai gym that offers kickboxing instruction, and the Buddhist temple complex across from the lodge, Wat Si Phraya.

"Most of the visitors who come here want to see Bangkok's big attractions—the Grand Palace, the Emerald Buddha, Wat Arun. And they should see these things that are so important to Thai history and culture. But we want them to see more than tourism sites; we want them to feel the city's life, too."

Soon after Samsen 5 Lodge opened its doors, Worapan began running workshops for young Thai entrepreneurs who wanted to do similar projects.

"Old Bangkok is full of possibilities. There are abandoned schools, warehouses, chophouses, and other public buildings that are in danger of being torn down and could be repurposed into guesthouses and restaurants. We show others how they can renovate," he explains, "and, more important, how they can fit their business, and their guests, into the neighborhood culture."

His idea has caught fire: Worapan has led ten workshops, all sellouts. His "graduates," mainly Bangkokers in their 30s and 40s, now are seeding small guesthouses in the little side streets and lanes of Old Bangkok. A more cosmopolitan younger generation, says Worapan, sees the potential in the beautiful, sturdy bones of Old Bangkok's buildings.

"The typical people at my conferences are from good Thai families, have traveled abroad, and been exposed to boutique hotels on their trips. They are creative, and their eyes are open to possibilities."

I'm about to ask him to write down the addresses of guesthouses founded by his workshop students, but he anticipates me: "I've called some owners already; they're waiting to show you their places. I've got some errands to run in the same area; why don't we go together?"

The only clue we're nearing a place where foreign travelers may be staying is an antiques shop on the corner of Feung Nakorn Road that has a hand-lettered sign in English: COFFEE.

"I think this is the right lane," Worapan says hesitantly. Though we're only a 20-minute walk from his place, we're on the "other" side of Old Bangkok, just south of the busy boulevard called Ratchadamnoen Klang. Bangkok's lanes are such self-contained worlds that moving from one to another feels almost as if you've changed cities.

Worapan pulls out his cellphone to call ahead, and we continue down the dusty, unremarkable lane. Thanyaporn Piamwiriya (call me Benz), a pretty woman in her early 30s, spots us and gestures us toward the tall gate of the Feung Nakorn Balcony guesthouse. The gate opens to reveal a lush, hidden park. Vermilion- and white-spotted koi float in a pond surrounded by a teakwood deck and lounge chairs. A four-story building with balconies and catwalks wraps around the garden.

"Can you tell what this building used to be?" Benz asks me. An apartment building, I guess? A motel?

"An elementary school!" she says, laughing.

Worapan the architect chimes in: "Adaptive reuse."

"My parents own the property, and my father wanted to turn it into a parking lot," Benz continues. "I begged them to let me

STANDING BY THE KOI POND, LISTENING TO THE BIRDSONG IN THE TREES, I IMAGINE MYSELF IN THE QUIETER, GENTLER BANGKOK OF THE 1950s.

try doing a small hotel." They agreed, but assumed she wanted to construct the kind of revenue-generating box that has been the reliable template for budget Bangkok guesthouses. Benz, however, a traveler with an eye for design, had taken Worapan's course and had other ideas.

"My parents are very conservative; they didn't understand why I was spending money and hiring an interior designer and an architect. I had to fight with them a lot. I also cried a lot."

Through the tears, Benz started transforming the old school. Classrooms became sweetly appointed guest rooms, each painted in a warm pastel-and-white color scheme and furnished with white wooden beds and chairs, and large windows that look out to the pond or to dark green mango trees in the yard. A night's stay in a balcony room here is a bit pricier than at a Khao San Road guesthouse but still well in the budget range. Standing by the koi pond, listening to the birdsong in the trees, I imagine myself in the quieter, gentler Bangkok of the 1950s. As they say, it's all about location: The *sois* in Old Bangkok have a natural grace, an effortless atmosphere, that a new luxury hotel struggles to achieve.

"THERE ARE 96 WOODEN HOUSES just like this in the area, but this is the one my family fell in love with."

Nidhi Akkaravivat sweeps his arm toward the two-story 1920s teakwood house—"in the colonial style"—that he has turned into a successful B&B called Baan Dinso. I've made my way here on my own; Worapan was busy but kindly drew a back-of-the-envelope map and pointed me in the right direction.



An orange-robed Buddhist monk (above) collects alms at the Thewet Market, where shops specialize in gardening supplies. Briefly idle, an auto rickshaw, or *tuk-tuk* (below), sits ready to transport passengers through Bangkok's bustling traffic. Young members of Thailand's National Scout Organization (left), their khaki uniforms spruced up with yellow neckerchiefs, pause on their way home.





It's been a wonderful walk. I passed a tiny restaurant that caught me with its aroma of roast duck, and a row of stores selling foodstuffs, teas, and medicines wrapped in yellow cellophane that Thai people give to monks to "make merit." I browsed stores selling the powdery, jasmine-scented balls that older Thai women use for fragrance. A stroll of about 20 minutes took me 40.

I remove my shoes, Thai style, and stroll across the cool, polished wooden floor of Baan Dinso's foyer as Nidhi signals for a staff person to bring me some water.

"The house was in a sad condition," he says. "The owners decided to move to the suburbs because they couldn't fit their car down this narrow lane. At first we were obsessed by the beauty of it. We thought we would purchase the place for my parents to retire in."

Then an even better idea came to Nidhi, who had noticed boutique guesthouses popping up in the area. Why not have the house pay for itself by starting a small business in it? Baan Dinso echoes the small hotels and pensions in Europe; wood platform beds, white linens, bathrooms down the hall. The hotel, which opened in 2006, has won awards from the Association of Siamese Architects for its restoration and

I PASS A TINY RESTAURANT WITH AN AROMA OF ROAST DUCK, AND STORES SELLING POWDERY, JASMINE-SCENTED BALLS WOMEN USE FOR FRAGRANCE. A WALK OF 20 MINUTES TAKES ME 40.

become a hit with European visitors—so popular that in 2013, Nidhi opened a second Baan Dinso a few blocks away.

"We are small, only nine rooms, so we can get to know our guests and help them plan their activities," he tells me. "Many guests are surprised to find they don't need a plan because so many interesting places to eat and explore are here. We had a Swiss guest, a lady. She spent three or four days with us, just wandering the neighborhood and getting lost. She never made it to the Grand Palace."

"WOULD YOU MIND eating breakfast twice?" Worapan, again, catches me unawares as I'm slurping down the bowl of congee he left for me. "I'm going up to the Sri Yan area. We can have something to eat, then look at a guesthouse project under construction that my group helped design."

I put down my spoon, grab my sunglasses, and we head out to catch a bus. I thought I knew Samsen Road, but this morning I see it through Worapan's eyes, the eyes of an architect and native son. He points out one building after another, shaking his head with dismay.

"That row of chopouses will be gone soon. A developer with several big hotels on Khao San Road is going to put up a big box, probably 80 rooms. And that 1960s building with the detail

that looks like a concrete grille? It also is slated for demolition."

In other words, development is slowly creeping out of the Khao San Road area and insinuating its way into Old Bangkok. The bus whisks us 15 blocks north, to the part of Samsen where English signs disappear and no foreigners wander the streets.

"I grew up right around here," Worapan says, smiling now. He points out some area landmarks, such as his high school, St. Gabriel's College, and the sleek modernist building that houses the state-run Bank of Thailand—a formidable walled and gated fortress manned by a guard. "It's on the grounds of one of the royal palaces," Worapan adds.

Ten minutes later, we are lost in the sois of Sri Yan, where Worapan still lives on a Thai-style compound with his mother and brother.

"Sri Yan is famous around Bangkok for its market and street food," he says, and makes a beeline to his childhood favorite. "This is Look Chin Sri Yan. I have been coming here with my family more than 30 years. When my father was alive, the owner wouldn't ever let us pay."

As we delve into *sen mee*—needle-slender noodles made of rice—and peppery meatballs, he explains why: His father was an official of Thailand's Crown Property Bureau, the agency charged with managing and collecting rents on all of the royal family's property. In Bangkok, their holdings amount to a majority of the land.

"My father made sure the owner of the beef-ball shop didn't lose his lease, or have his rent rise too much, so he could remain in business a long time."

I suddenly understand why so many of these riverside Bangkok neighborhoods feel frozen in time, filled with traditional mom-and-pop shops. The slow, conservative hand of royal patronage has controlled the levers of Bangkok's development rather than the go-go pace of Asian property moguls.

A 15-minute walk, a turn down another soi, and a small gate opens. We're at Worapan's consulting project, a rambling old two-story house with shutters, upstairs balconies, and a pocket-size garden. I hear a rat-a-tat of hammers.

"They're taking out walls so they can put in nine rooms and more bathrooms," says Worapan. Tucked neatly into its lane, this future home base for travelers from England and Japan, the United States and Sweden, folds completely into the life of its soi. So, Worapan hopes, will its guests. I imagine them venturing out from the guesthouse to discover their own favorite vendors, beef-ball noodles, and Thai treasures. And perhaps eventually, like me, they will find a home on their own Bangkok soi that calls them back again and again.

Editor at Large **DAISANN McLANE** divides her time between New York and Hong Kong, where she runs the tour company Little Adventures in Hong Kong. Contributing photographer **SUSAN SEUBERT** alleviated Bangkok's humid heat with a local favorite: freshly squeezed pomegranate juice.

Symbols of enlightenment, 37 metal spires (top left) on the Buddhist Wat Ratchanaddaram temple inspired its nickname, "iron monastery." Two men (top right) tuck into noodles at a streetside eatery. Rooms at the Baan Dinso guesthouse (bottom right) look out on typical local dwellings, many topped with metal roofs. A woman (bottom left) dishes up chicken curry over rice at her sidewalk kitchen. "Homelife seems to just spill out onto the narrow alleys in Old Bangkok," says photographer Susan Seubert.

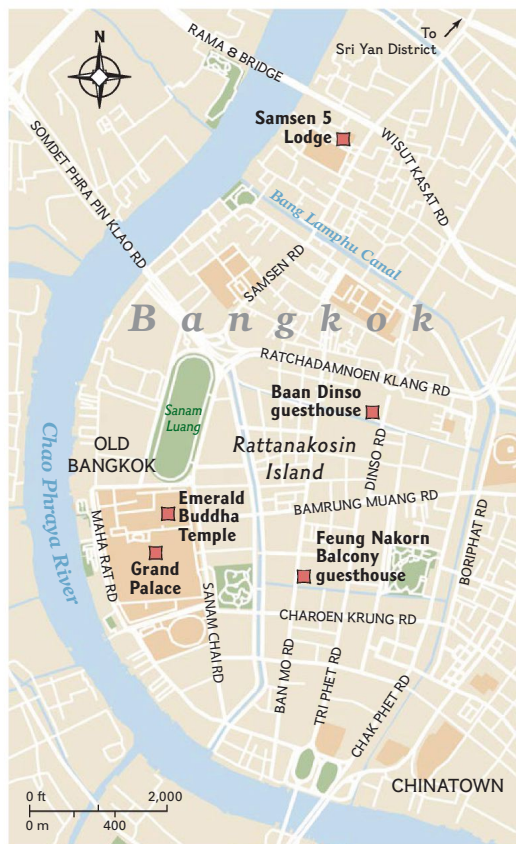
Old Bangkok

THAILAND'S CAPITAL is at its most evocative in the narrow lanes and streets of Old Bangkok, where a renaissance of small, owner-restored guesthouses is making it easy for visitors to experience the rich culture of everyday Thai life.

WHERE TO STAY

Samsen 5 Lodge offers three rooms, all en suite; \$38-65. High ceilings and teak floors mark **Baan Dinso** guesthouse's nine rooms; \$30-90. Guests at the **SSIP Boutique Dhevej Bangkok**, a new 20-room boutique hotel founded by a descendant of Thai royalty, sleep in four-poster beds; amenities include

Thann aromatherapy toiletries—and a fortune-teller; \$66 and up. **Phranakorn Nornlen's** 30 guest rooms occupy a former hotel close to Thewet Market and the river; quirky touches include an antiques exhibit and workshops in book-binding; \$70 and up. **Feung Nakorn Balcony**, a 38-room hotel built around a quiet courtyard,



SHOPPING

BANGKOK'S FINE ARTS AND WARES

Few travelers leave Bangkok without a souvenir of Thai silk, jewelry, or artisanal apparel. For traditional silk textiles, jewelry, and gifts, stop in **Taekee Taekon** (118 Phra Artit Road). Affordable museum-quality antique silks are the prize at **Loom & Reed** (275/28 Samsen Road). Weekends, visit **Chatuchak Market** for an amazing array of items, from housewares to works by young Thai designers. As the sun sets, head south to the **Thieves Market** for remarkable secondhand bargains.

has something for everyone, suites to dorm beds; \$18 (dorm bed) to \$131. Thai antiques and textiles distinguish the ten floral-themed guest rooms at the **Old Bangkok Inn**, a luxe option in Old Bangkok. The inn's gracious owners are descendants of an old princely Thai family; \$92-191.

WHERE TO EAT

It's Bangkok, so we're talking street food. Walk down **Soi 2** and **Soi 4**, just off Samsen Road, and you'll find a feast of regional Thai cuisines, especially Isan, known for its meat salads and sticky rice. On **Samsen Soi 4**, watch the vendor pummel the papaya for your *som tum* in a mortar while you wait for your barbecue fish from the lady on the other side of the street. Feeling adventurous? Hop a bus going north and get off at **Nakhon Chaisi Road**, in the Sri

Yan neighborhood, to graze from an array of food carts and popular noodle shops (Worapan Klampaiboon's fave, **Look Chin Sri Yan**, is just one of many famous eateries here). **Phra Artit** and **Phra Sumen Roads** remain the "restaurant row" of Old Bangkok; Try **Hemlock** for a terrific sit-down feast of "ancient Thai cuisine" and **Roti Mataba** for a taste of Thai Muslim breads and curry.

WHAT TO READ

Very Thai: Everyday Popular Culture (2013), by Philip Cornwell-Smith and John Goss, decodes the exuberant visual language of Bangkok's streets.

WHAT TO KNOW

As of press time, the civil unrest that has affected Bangkok has stabilized. Travelers planning a visit should check for advisories at travel.state.gov.

ATLAS



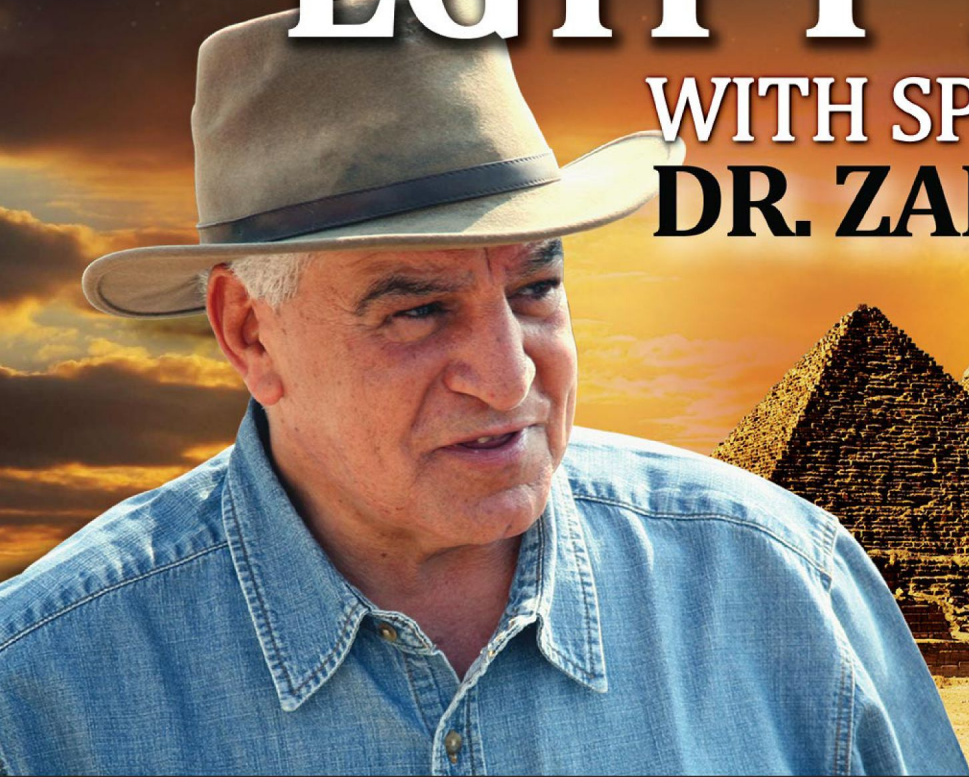
Bangkok's full name is **Krung Thep Mahanakhon Amon Rattanakosin Mahinthara Yuthaya Mahadilok Phop Noppharat Ratchathani Burirom Udomratchaniwet Mahasathan Amon Piman Awatan Sathit Sakka-thattiya Witsanukam Prasit**.

The head is sacred in Thai culture, and shouldn't be touched by others.

The world's largest solid gold Buddha is in Bangkok's **Wat Traimit** temple.

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Group photo - February 2014 Egypt tour with Dr. Zahi Hawass.

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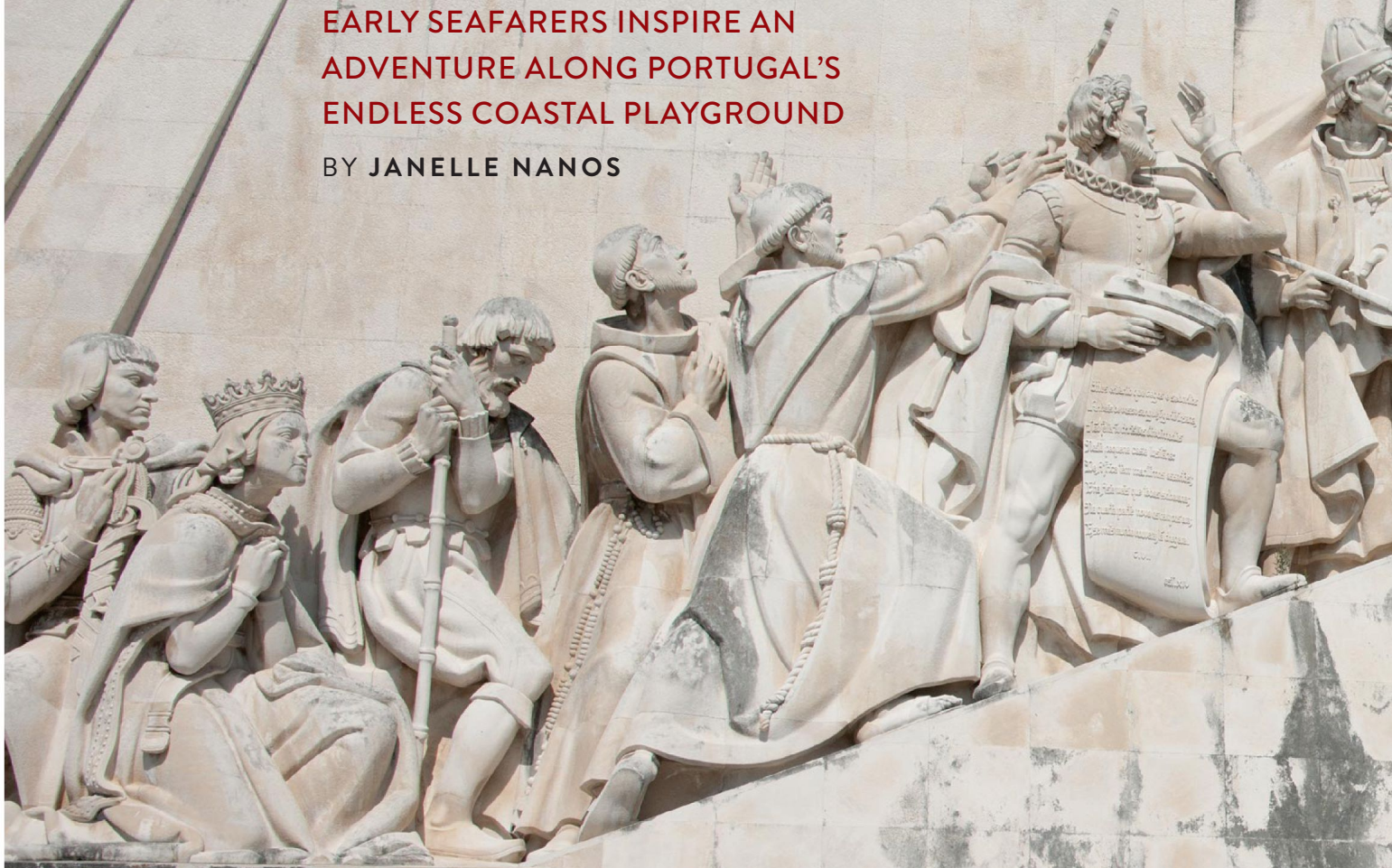
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EXPLORERS CLUB

EARLY SEAFARERS INSPIRE AN
ADVENTURE ALONG PORTUGAL'S
ENDLESS COASTAL PLAYGROUND

BY JANELLE NANOS



Lisbon pays tribute to
Portugal's role in the
age of exploration at
Belém's Padrão dos
Descobrimentos.



PORTUGAL IS MADE FOR WANDERERS.

From the top of the Moorish remnants of Castelo de São Jorge, Lisbon cascades downhill in all directions, new paths beckoning at every turn. To the south, the 25 de Abril bridge spans the Tagus River, a ringer for San Francisco's Golden Gate. Across the harbor, the outstretched arms of the "Cristo Rei" statue remind me of Rio. ¶ I'm at once exhilarated and overwhelmed. Since arriving in the capital, my husband, Tim, and I had hopped trams and traipsed through the Alfama district, where the cobblestoned streets contort into knots. We had taken in the austerity of the Sé cathedral. We had woven around clubgoers in the Bairro Alto.

But even after the perpetual motion of the past few days, restlessness had started to seep in. Something about the city stirs up my need to move. It's not just me: Legend goes that Lisbon got its start when Odysseus, the mythical Greek warrior, passed through, and vagabonds have gravitated here ever since. In the 15th and 16th centuries, Portuguese sailors expanded the mapped world by setting off from Iberian shores: Vasco da Gama headed south, arriving in India after navigating around the Cape of Good Hope, while Ferdinand Magellan pushed west, his expedition completing the world's first circumnavigation.

As a child, dragging my finger over the globe, I retraced those intrepid men's routes. As an adult, I'm always dragging friends down alleys in search of the authentic. So when I learned that Portugal's coastline south of Lisbon was among its least visited regions, Tim saw the telltale glint in my eyes. He was sold when I told him that our end point, Sagres, sits on a precipice jutting into the ocean near Europe's southwesternmost point. Early navigators once considered it the "end of the world"—a romantic grace note to this trip marking a dozen years together.

BEFORE WE EMBARK on our voyage, though, we need to get out of the parking lot at the Lisbon airport. Tim hasn't driven a car with a manual transmission in over a decade. So here we are, bucking in our seats as the car stalls. If only we had a fleet of ships instead of this Fiat. Though I'm hoping Nüvi, our smooth-talking GPS, will do us more good than an astrolabe and sextant.

"You know what you're doing, right?" I ask, and Tim shoots me a sideways glance while tapping the gas. All of our plans hang in the balance—really, in the clutch. Something tells me the mapping of the New World would have turned out different if there had been more marital bickering involved. "I've got this," he says, and the car roars to life, and we lurch forward.

Soon enough we've made it to Belém, a historic district on the outskirts of Lisbon that served as the launching point for

hundreds of voyages. Engravings of sea mermaids writhe on the facade of the Jerónimos Monastery, a World Heritage site where da Gama's body now rests. The mural in the adjacent maritime museum shows Prince Henry the Navigator (1394-1460) surrounded by knights and geographers as he unscrolls a map. Though many historians contend that his reputation was exaggerated, the prince financed numerous fleets and played host to prominent astronomers, cartogra-

phers, and scientists at his legendary nautical school in Sagres. "These guys are no match for Nüvi," Tim jokes.

We grab some fuel—a pair of cinnamon-sugar-dusted custard tarts at the nearby Pastéis de Belém—for the climb up the Padrão dos Descobrimentos. A monument to Portugal's role in the age of exploration, the huge edifice points out toward the water like the bow of a ship. To our west the iconic Tower of Belém stands guard over the harbor as it has for nearly 500 years. The limestone fortress incorporates design details from Morocco, Venice, and India, inspired by da Gama's journeys. A carving of a rhinoceros commemorates the real one that India gave Portugal as a diplomatic gift in 1515.

All of which reminds me: We need to keep moving. After another round of wrangling the clutch, our silver car kicks into gear and we slide over the wide red bridge south under the Cristo Rei's open arms.

Thirty miles away is the port town of Setúbal, known for dolphin sightings and fresh seafood. It's getting late in the day, and Tim is starving. "Just a bit farther," I insist. I'm determined to get dinner in Portinho da Arrábida, a tiny village I've spotted on the map amid the cliffs and coves of Arrábida Natural Park. As the Fiat hugs the limestone rock face and we gain elevation, a forest of cypress and magnolia trees unfurls below. The village is nearly empty when we pull up, save for a few stray dogs and a handful of backpackers. A yellow dinghy bobs in the water. The horizon turns indigo, and I grimace, worried I'm setting us up for a dinner of emergency granola bars.

But we've arrived just in time. At one of the seaside cafés, our waiter jabs a finger toward the menu listing for fish stew—the only thing still available. Seated on the patio, we have the view of the water to ourselves. A few minutes later, a steaming bowl of shrimp, mussels, razor clams, and rice arrives, and we dig in, sucking the heads of the shrimp.

The next morning, the two of us drive aboard an acid green ferry to the Tróia Peninsula, a tourist enclave of golf courses,



A city emblem since 1884, when funiculars debuted in Lisbon, trams are picturesque (above, with Portuguese tiles) and indispensable, connecting the steep capital's neighborhoods and squares such as Largo de Santo Antonio (below).





Belém's Jerónimos Monastery (above left) epitomizes Manueline architecture, a 16th-century style celebrating nautical Portugal—a way of life carried on by sardine street vendors (above right) in Lisbon and beachgoers in Sagres (below).



modern hotels, and white-sand beaches. We claim a stretch of sand in Comporta, then sip cocktails in the Ilha do Arroz café, a setting so stylized it could have its own Instagram filter. It's tempting to give in to this shade of paradise, but perfection isn't what I'm after. As I scan the water for bottlenose dolphins, Tim picks up on my signals and can tell I'm ready to move on.

So we return to the road and push farther south, where the marshy rice paddies give way to the rolling hills of Sines, the birthplace of da Gama and now home to a modern arts center. It's the last dose of contemporary life we'll have for a while; here begins the truly wild coastline of the Alentejo.

Tim pulls over for a break, and I spot the signs that mark the Rota Vicentina, a recently built network of trails delineating some 200 miles of the southwest coast. Our choice is between the blue and green Fishermen's Trail, which winds along the cliffs, and the red and white Historical Way, which re-creates paths medieval pilgrims took through cork forests and fields of heather. We hike for an hour overlooking the Atlantic, then linger to dangle our feet off a cliff's edge. For the first time all week, my brain stops plotting our next move. Minutes float by as we get lost watching waves struggle to splash us from below.

As we drive south, cows graze along the highway. In Vila Nova de Milfontes, a small fishing village that endured repeated attacks by 16th-century pirates, we park and walk down to the water, following the aroma of Restaurante A Choupana, which we find tucked behind a police station. On stilts along the ocean, the thatched-roof restaurant is surrounded by orange cacti flowers that glow like the embers of the grill the spot is known for. Inside, children with ice cream cones dash between picnic tables. The chef flips chicken and sardines over the coals.

Virgilio is our waiter. "Like the poet," he says, bringing us a silver plate of steamed clams and the seared catch of the day. He grabs our camera off the table and makes us pose. "I take great pictures," he says, framing a series with the surf crashing behind us. Even cheesy snapshots have the flair of poetry in this setting.

That evening, we check in at the Herdade da Matinha, a country house two miles down a dirt path off the highway. I had found the place with the help of Casas Brancas (named for Portugal's whitewashed inns), an association of independent lodgings, restaurants, and outfitters in the Alentejo. The nonprofit's Marta Cabral told me that this region was long overlooked as a poor and sparsely populated swath south of Lisbon. But the Alentejo has emerged as an authentic alternative to the crowded beaches in the Algarve region farther south, she explained—a bastion of rural hospitality.

Owners Monica Belezza and her artist husband, Alfredo Moreira da Silva, cook all of the meals at the inn; da Silva's colorful canvases accent each room. Tim and I pick oranges from the trees and eat them alongside the lap pool. After a dinner of roast chicken, grilled eggplant and sardines, and Portuguese wine, we spend the evening curled up by an outdoor fireplace. "I'm not sure I want to leave," I say.

The next morning, we find da Silva in swim trunks standing on a ladder in the dining room, hanging a surfboard over a doorway. Belezza is standing by, carefully monitoring his balance.

"We lived in the center of Lisbon, and always thought it would be nice to have a restaurant in the country," she tells us. "We thought, 'Let's move to Australia'—then visited this part of Portugal and realized we could have that rugged diversity here."

Their bliss is contagious. "Do you think we could open an inn some day?" I ask Tim. He smiles. "Do you think you could handle slowing down?" He makes a good point. Yet I feel an unexpected urge to put down roots and let travelers come to me.

But for now, we return to the mission at hand: the final stretch toward Sagres. We navigate mountain switchbacks, past the cliffs of Zambujeira do Mar and through tunnels of pine and eucalyptus trees. These give way to valleys scattered with cattle, then hillsides dotted with wind turbines. We've reached that part of a journey where conversation would only get in our way. VW vans coated in dust carry surfboards on their roofs. As we coast into the Algarve and past the town of Vila do Bispo, I see what looks like quicksilver on the horizon. It's the ocean. Then I do a double take: Is that an armada of windsurfer sails bobbing just a few hundred yards away? No, they're on land, harnessing the wind on wheels, not waves.

Finally, we reach the windswept edge of Europe at Sagres and wander among fortress relics. A placard identifies Atlantic,

WE HIKE FOR AN HOUR OVERLOOKING THE ATLANTIC, THEN LINGER TO DANGLE OUR FEET OFF A CLIFF'S EDGE. FOR THE FIRST TIME ALL WEEK, MY BRAIN STOPS PLOTTING OUR NEXT MOVE.

Mediterranean, and African bird species, a mix not found elsewhere in Europe. Tim notes the merging of worlds: Romans named this place Sacrum ("holy"), later drawing Christian pilgrims. Some are said to have stuck around to attend Prince Henry's navigational school here. All that remains is a church, a few brittle buildings, and a massive circle of stones. As for its function, the best guess is a mariner's compass.

A white stork glides above our heads, and we try to avoid vertigo looking down the 250-foot cliffs, only to notice a man fishing off the "end of the world." There's a tug on his line, and he grabs his rod between his knees—it's a big one. The man strings a basket on the line and sends it down. Standing on the edge with the grace of a tightrope walker, he gently pulls on the line, maneuvering his catch into the basket. A few seconds later, the basket reappears, a silvery sea bream squirming inside. He pulls it onto the rocks. We clap; he raises his fists in victory.

"How long have you been here?" a man asks him.

"Two hours, and two fish," he says. "And they're big fish." He smiles, wraps them in a bag, and packs up for the day.

We take his cue. Tomorrow will bring more fish—and more discoveries. Today belongs to this cliff, and to each other.

JANELLE NANOS, a former editor at *Traveler*, wrote about road-tripping on Long Island in the June/July 2013 issue.

THE INSIDER

Portugal's Southwest Coast

SURF CAMPS dot the 215-mile stretch south of Lisbon. Part of the region known as the Alentejo, this shore is far quieter than the Algarve beaches at the country's southern edge. Allot at least three days to leisurely explore the coast.

HOW TO NAVIGATE

Most rental car agencies in Europe offer manual transmission cars at lower prices than those with automatic transmissions. If GPS isn't available (even companies that promise navigational systems don't always deliver), head to the **Rent-a-Stuff** center at the Lisbon airport to rent a unit (around \$17 a day). Ask about toll payment policies.

The ferries that take passengers from Setúbal to the Tróia Peninsula leave on the half hour and take about 30 minutes to cross (just under \$20 a car; atlanticferries.pt).

WHERE TO STAY

On the tip of the Tróia Peninsula sits the modish new **Design Hotel**, its building undulating like the waves breaking on the shore. From \$190.

The Casas Brancas association (www.casasbrancas.pt) partners with independent lodges and inns throughout the Alentejo and also provides a full list of surf schools, donkey treks, and mountain biking outfitters. At the 21-room **Herdade da Matinha**, the owners prepare gourmet meals and also offer yoga classes, surf lessons, and horseback riding. From \$110.

All but abandoned by its original occupants, Aldeia da Pedralva (a village near Vila do Bispo) has rebounded and restored its cottages for rental with terraces, barbecues, and courtyards. From \$98.

WHERE TO EAT

Several seafood restaurants perch on stilts in the harbor of Portinho da Arrábida, the small cove in the heart of Arrábida Natural Park. All are good, but **Restaurante Beira Mar** has the largest patio.

Claim a red pouf at Comporta's beachside **Ilha do Arroz**, or visit **Museu do Arroz**, in an old rice husking mill. Both serve salt-cod fish cakes, stews brimming with clam and shrimp, and blueberry-cachaça *caipiroskas*.

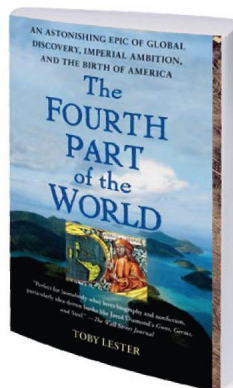
In Vila Nova de Milfontes, **Restaurante A Choupana** offers ocean views among Portugal's best; order the clams. Down in Zambujeira do Mar,



traditional fishermen's tavern **O Sacas** serves spider crab, barnacles, and fried moray eel.

WHAT TO READ

In *The Fourth Part of the World* (2009), Toby Lester recounts the raucous tales of explorations, many of which set out from Portuguese shores, that led to the creation of the first map to name America.



ATLAS



Portuguese missionaries in the 16th and 17th centuries introduced Japan to batter-fried Lenten fish—the original tempura.

Portugal harvests over half of the world's cork.

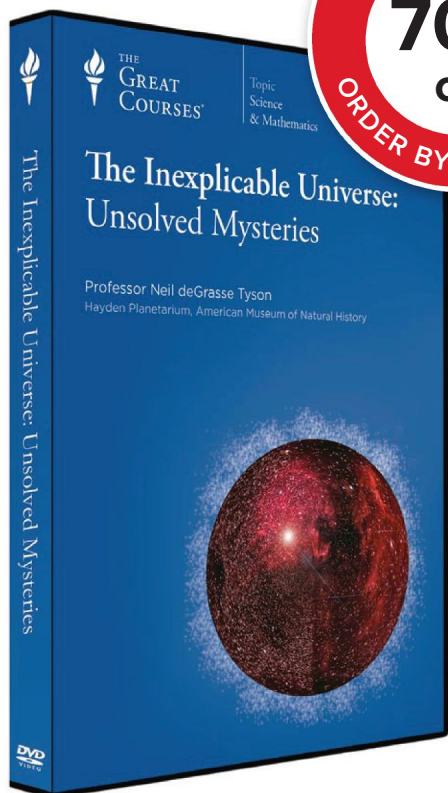
Fado, a mournful musical style, stems from the essential Portuguese trait of fatalism and was recognized by UNESCO in 2011 as an "intangible cultural heritage."



LOCAL FLAVOR

LISBON'S SWEET SPOT

No visit to the capital's Belém district is complete without sampling its famous custard tarts, *pastéis de nata* (above), said to have been first whipped up by 17th-century nuns at the Jerónimos Monastery. Join the line snaking out the door at historic Antiga Confeitaria de Belém (aka Pastéis de Belém). Dusted with cinnamon and sugar, each egg-and-cream treat can be devoured in three bites—so order accordingly.



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STEEL MAGNOLIA

OUT OF THE SOUTH'S CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLE, RESILIENT BIRMINGHAM



BY BRUCE SCHOENFELD
PHOTOGRAPHS BY SUSAN SEUBERT

BLOSSOMS ANEW



I FIND

Niki's West on Birmingham's industrial north side, maybe a mile from an old pig-iron foundry. It's a windowless room with linoleum floors that has been serving meat-and-threes—an entrée and a choice of sides—since before George Wallace first ran for Alabama governor. I join the cafeteria-style line, which is jammed tight for a Tuesday lunch, feeling as if I'm stepping back half a century. I emerge with heaping plates of chicken, turnip greens, black-eyed peas, butter beans, corn bread, and cherry pie. Halfway through my meal, I finally look up and realize this can't be 1963 because I see roughly the same number of black customers as white.

That checkerboard of faces reveals how far Birmingham has come. Once so committed to segregation that it was called America's Johannesburg, Birmingham has loomed large in my consciousness. Throughout my Connecticut childhood, its name served as code for racial intolerance. Now, five decades after the civil rights movement's most galvanizing events—Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter From Birmingham Jail," the Children's Crusade, and the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church—I've come down to see how much has changed.

I've found a modern city that has retained its pace and charm, one with many of the accoutrements and attitudes of the New South but without the shiny facelessness common to too many cities around the region. You can do a billion-dollar banking deal in Birmingham. But you can also still eat at Niki's.

I ask my waitress whether Niki's started off serving the white or the black community when it opened in the '50s, since at that time it wouldn't have been possible for them to gather together. Eyes wide, she runs off to fetch one of the owners, then returns to say that they're both working the line. She scrawls a phone number on a scrap of paper place mat. And that's the last I see of her.

When I call that evening, a woman tells me that both Teddy and Pete Hontzas, who inherited the restaurant from their father, are too busy to talk. They won't be able to talk in the morning, either, or the next afternoon, or anytime in the foreseeable future. Today's business and civic leaders have made their peace with the city's past. But that doesn't mean they want to discuss it.

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO VISIT Birmingham, with a population of some 212,000, and not confront the struggle for racial equality. Civil rights is living history here. The city doesn't let itself forget.

Walking around downtown, I'm never far from one of the seven-foot-high Heritage Trail markers, more than 200 of which are spread throughout the city. One on 19th Street between Sixth and Park has a photo of King getting arrested at that spot. "Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering and struggle," it quotes him as saying.

Turning a corner, I see the 16th Street Baptist

Church. The staging area for marches and protests over the years, it's where the Ku Klux Klan planted bombs that killed four girls on September 15, 1963. This is a national historic landmark, built of sturdy stone more than a century ago, and—as much as any inanimate structure can be—a major protagonist in the civil rights movement. Yet for decades it has been hidden in plain sight. I don't recall ever seeing a picture of it.

At the Civil Rights Institute across the street, I spend two hours immersed in old news footage. There's a replica of King's



Students from Linda Dobbins Dance Studio (opposite), in Mountain Brook, Alabama, gather in downtown Birmingham for a dance competition at the landmark Alabama Theatre (right).

jail cell, and interviews with participants in the city's protests and boycotts, mostly ordinary people who were living and working amid the tumult. Especially poignant is a display of the shoes, doll, purse, and other belongings of 11-year-old Denise McNair, the youngest of the four church bombing victims.

I step out of the museum into a far different place: a thriving metropolis with a black mayor, dozens of black corporate executives, and a list of accomplished native sons and daughters that includes Carl Lewis and Condoleezza Rice. Birmingham's university hospital is now a leading center for health care and medical research. The city has the region's largest public art museum, manicured public parks, and small but significant communities of Latinos and Kenyans and Russians.

As in other American cities, race relations here remain a work in progress. Fifty years on, Birmingham's challenges are anything but unique. But in part by memorializing its past and in part by transcending it, the area has refashioned itself into a place both livable and relevant, part of the national conversation in unexpected ways. "You'll be surprised by what you find," Scott Mowbray, the editor of *Cooking Light* magazine—which is based in the city—told me when I said I'd be visiting.

One night Mowbray drives me to Ona's Music Room. It's part of a commercial complex in a renovated Dr. Pepper plant, the kind of repurposed development that's usually home to the same national chains as any shopping mall. Here, though, there are local boutiques, small businesses—and Vittoria, a new Italian *salumeria* that cures its own charcuterie. When we arrive at Ona's, a jazz quintet is playing for an audience of young and old, well-dressed and grungy, attentive and distracted. "You probably don't think of Birmingham this way," Mowbray says, "but some of the music that passes through is amazing. And the crowds that go hear it are as eclectic as you can get." I see his point. What would have been radical, even sometimes illegal, in the early 1960s is taken for granted today.

I have the same feeling at Highlands Bar and Grill, renowned as the city's best restaurant since the 1980s. Chef and owner Frank Stitt worked at Berkeley's Chez Panisse and in Europe. Then he returned to raise the level of fine dining in his home state. Dishes like braised duck with chicory and pork chops with roasted sweet potatoes and escarole bring French sensibilities to familiar southern flavors. "The restaurant still remains the best reason to move to Birmingham that I can think of," author Pat Conroy once wrote.

With white tablecloths and waiters in semiformal dress but a warmth that I'm finding most everywhere I visit around the city, Highlands is classy without feeling unapproachable. Mayor William Bell eats at Highlands nearly every Tuesday night when he's in town. Sitting at the bar, I meet politically connected attorney Michael Choy, the son of a Chinese father and an African-American mother. Over braised rabbit and Pinot Noir, we start to discuss race, but the conversation soon strays: to wine, southern politics, and then the University of Alabama football team. We end up debating the merits of country club golf versus public courses, and, finally, the consummate artistry of Highlands' signature stone-ground grits, which we

contemplate ordering with a nightcap before learning that the kitchen has closed.

WHEREVER I GO IN BIRMINGHAM, I orient myself by looking for the 56-foot-tall representation of Vulcan, the Roman god of fire and the forge, that looms over the city. The largest cast-iron statue in America, it's visible almost everywhere in town. Now I'm off to visit it. I head south out of downtown and up Red Mountain and wind my way toward the iron giant, which is the centerpiece of the Vulcan Park and Museum.

After an elevator ride up to the base of the statue, I see Birmingham laid out before me—cradled in the Jones Valley, framed by twin ridges of the western end of the Appalachians. It's a geographic setting that emphasizes the separation between the city and its suburbs—and though the hills are easily traversed these days on highways, they're still a psychological barrier to suburbanites returning downtown in the evening.

Inside the museum, rooms representing the different phases of Birmingham's history underscore the crucial role that mining

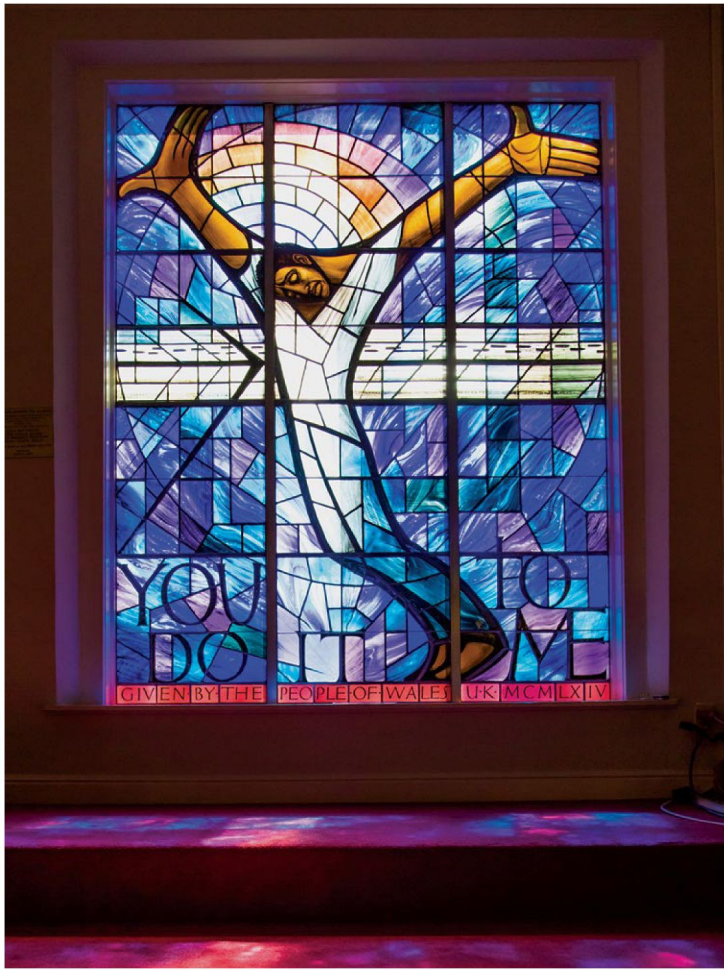
BIRMINGHAM HAS REFASHIONED ITSELF INTO A PLACE BOTH LIVABLE AND RELEVANT, PART OF THE NATIONAL CONVERSATION IN UNEXPECTED WAYS.

played in building the city, which is one of the few in the Southeast that didn't exist before the Civil War. Until recently, Vulcan was a symbol of better times. During the industrial era that it represents, Birmingham was the South's second largest metropolis. U.S. Steel employed as many as 30,000 residents, white and black, and paid them well, creating a thriving—though decidedly segregated—middle class.

Then steel collapsed, and the local economy went with it. "We got left in the dust by other cities in the region," says Richard Arrington, Jr., who served as Birmingham's first black mayor, from 1979 to 1999. A former anodyne marketing slogan epitomized how low the city's reputation had sunk: "Birmingham: It's Better Than You Think."

But later, driving through its neighborhoods, I come to understand what those marketers were trying to get across. In Highland Park, on the city's southern rim, the shops and restaurants along the graceful streets seem desirable yet not snooty or exclusive. In Avondale, I stop at a watering hole with the somewhat preposterous name of 41st St. Pub & Aircraft Sales and find a bar full of true believers in America's craft bourbon and rye revival. As pleasant days segue into balmy nights, I realize that Birmingham *is* better than I'd believed. The University of Alabama at Birmingham hospital not only drives its economy but, by recruiting employees from around

Clockwise from upper left: A memorial window at the 16th Street Baptist Church given by the people of Wales after the 1963 bombing; strolling in Railroad Park; a sculpture in Kelly Ingram Park of police dogs used there against civil rights protesters; and a burlap bag of the historic Peanut Depot's specialty snack.





A favorite of Mayor William Bell, Highlands Bar and Grill features French-inflected southern cooking. Opposite: The Miles College baseball team plays at Rickwood Field, opened in 1910 and the oldest surviving baseball park in America.

the world, has helped create the texture of a major city. Yet the city's scale has remained manageable.

"We missed out on great opportunities in the past," acknowledges John Hudson, the 43-year-old president of the Alabama Power Foundation. "But the fact is, we don't want to be Atlanta. Bigger isn't always better. We like the size of our city. It's small enough that someone who wants to can make a positive impact."

One of the most tangible that I see is the remaking of downtown. A few brave entrepreneurs who glimpsed potential in the burned-out storefronts and abandoned buildings lead the effort. I'm impressed by Regions Field, which opened last spring downtown. It's one of the prettiest minor-league baseball parks I've seen, offering the game at its pastoral best, captured in a sleek, industrial setting that harks back to the city's past. It even succeeds in getting suburbanites to linger downtown at night.

Some are doing more than lingering. "We sort of woke up one day and there were lofts," is how Jim Noles, a local attorney, describes it when I meet him for oysters at the Fish Market on 22nd Street. Thousands of new arrivals now own or rent apartments in renovated buildings. With them has come a wave of youthful and urbane bars, restaurants, and cafés, such as El Barrio and Urban Standard, both on Second Avenue. Urban Standard is the kind of postmodern, ecologically minded neighborhood coffee shop typically found in thriving college towns. At breakfast there one morning, I watch the city come to life. There's a hipster talking college football, a university student

typing on her laptop, a twentysomething forking a tofu scramble while nodding with the hip-hop thump of the sound system.

Downtown is drawing people together, but the other unifying factor in the city might surprise me, Noles says. It's religion, which for decades served to do exactly the opposite. As Martin Luther King, Jr., famously noted: "It is appalling that the most segregated hour of Christian America is eleven o'clock on Sunday morning." But like patriotism, meat-and-threes, and Alabama football, the worship of God in today's Birmingham cuts across every demographic. "Head downtown on a Wednesday at noon," Noles advises, "and see what I mean."

It's lunchtime the next day when I visit Linn Park and run headlong into a church service taking place under the maples and oaks. As the Episcopal bishop for the Alabama diocese preaches from the Gospel of Matthew, I spot a wildly assorted group around him. A gray-haired man in a conservative suit stands beside a young woman in a puffy down jacket. One woman could be headed to the opera, or at least Neiman Marcus. Several men appear to be homeless. But when they break into "Go Tell It on the Mountain," their voices blend in...well, not quite harmony. But close.

Boulder, Colorado-based **BRUCE SCHOENFELD** wrote about classic American beach towns for the June/July 2014 issue.

SUSAN SEUBERT also contributed to that story, photographing Manzanita, Oregon, south of her home in Portland.



THE INSIDER

Birmingham, Alabama

LIKE EVERYWHERE in the Sunbelt, Birmingham seems to have a chain restaurant on every corner. But if you know where to look, you can eat wonderfully well and find meals that help tell the tale of the city over the past decades.

WHERE TO EAT

Breakfast at **Urban Standard** includes strong coffee, inspired omelet options, Bon Iver on the sound system, and transcendent strawberry cupcakes.

Brick & Tin attracts a downtown lunch-time crowd willing to risk spilling unique-to-Birmingham white barbecue sauce on dresses and suits. The menu also offers daily-special soups, sandwiches such as braised brisket with caramelized onions,

and a list of hard to find European wines by the glass.

For an unreconstructed Alabama meat joint, seek out **Saw's BBQ** on Oxmoor Road in suburban Homewood, which has that been-here-forever feel (though it dates only to 2009). Mike Wilson is a former test-kitchen chef for *Cooking Light*, but there's nothing light about his Flintstones-size slab of pork ribs, potatoes stuffed with pork and



ART 101

COLLECTIONS AGENCY

With more than 24,000 works, the Birmingham Museum of Art has one of the nation's largest and most diverse regional collections. Highlights include a newly renovated African gallery (above); simple but expressive folk pottery—bottles, jugs, jars, and pitchers—of 19th-century Alabama; and a photography gallery showcasing Henri Cartier-Bresson, Diane Arbus, and Weegee.

chicken, and banana pudding made with Nilla wafers.

And though Frank Stitt is justifiably famous for his **Highlands Bar and Grill**, many locals find themselves gravitating toward the hearty Italianesque flavors of his **Bottega**, set in a former mansion in the Highland Park area.

WHERE TO STAY

The venerable Tutwiler has gone (and come back reincarnated as a Hampton Inn), leaving the boutique-style **Hotel Highland** at Five Points as the option with the most personality. It provides a base from which to explore Highlands and the neighborhoods beyond.

WHAT TO SEE

Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark allows visitors to explore some 40 buildings of heavy machinery that made up one of the country's most productive pig-iron blast furnaces, operating from 1882 to 1970.

WHAT TO READ

There may be no better chronicle of the civil rights struggle through 1963 than Taylor Branch's *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954-63* (1988), much of which inevitably involves Birmingham.

Native-son novelist Walker Percy's *Love in the Ruins* (1971) offers a glimpse of the post-segregationist South, circa 1971.

ATLAS



Only in Birmingham can all three ingredients for smelting iron—coal, iron ore, and limestone—be found within a ten-mile radius.

Veterans Day was first celebrated in Birmingham.

The lighted dance floor at the Club, on Red Mountain, inspired film director John Badham, who grew up in Birmingham, to create the one John Travolta dances on in *Saturday Night Fever*.



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ONE CAN'T GET MORE REMOTE THAN TRISTAN DA CUNHA—AND THAT'S HOW





World

THE LOCALS LIKE IT

BY ANDY ISAACSON

It's Saturday night on

arguably the most far-flung inhabited island on Earth, and I'm nursing a South African beer at the Albatross, a pub that wouldn't seem out of place in England or even, say, America's Gulf Coast. A portly man croons to a country-and-western ballad playing on the jukebox. Local fishermen carouse. A football game—the British kind—is flickering on a TV set in the corner. The irony couldn't be more obvious: I've journeyed to one of the planet's remotest places and find myself in a scene resembling one from home. But there is, I'm learning, a distinction.

"You can get piss drunk here, fall down on your way home, and somebody will pick you up," an Albatross patron tells me between quaffs from his drink. "You don't have to worry about being mugged."

I'm on Tristan da Cunha, a British outpost in the middle of

we've never been to Timbuktu, most of us have acquired a vague notion of the place. Not Tristan. The name conjured nothing for me, except questions. Did tribal natives populate the island? What did they eat for dinner? What kind of trees grew there? A handful of other passengers on the S.A. *Agulhas II* were seized by the same curiosity. Some had business on the island—a Scottish dentist, a British priest, an American scientist planning to install a magnetometer to measure shifts in Earth's magnetic field. But there were a few tourists too. Two German men hoped to summit the volcano, Queen Mary's Peak. A Brit wanted to scuba dive where no one he knew ever had.

Standing on deck, I watched as our vessel approached the northwest side of the island. Soon, beneath the volcano's towering flanks, a cluster of low-slung structures with red and blue tin roofs appeared above a narrow grass plateau overlooking the ocean. This human settlement with 262 full-time residents seemed most improbable, a community afloat in emptiness.

"People imagine us with grass skirts on," dark-haired Iris Green, Tristan's postmistress, tells me in a lilting English accent. I'm at the window of the post office, which shares a building with the tourism office at the center of the settlement. A lobby displays hand-knit wool sweaters, postcards of seabirds, and commemorative postage stamps depicting such island traditions as potato planting, sheep shearing, and "giving out the mail." Tristan's cheerful tourism coordinator, Dawn Repetto, greets me. (Repetto is one of the island's seven surnames.) She had left a flyer at the private home where I'm staying—Tristan has no hotels or inns—promising to help fulfill my "Tristan ambitions." I'd wondered how I would fill four weeks on an island with no real tourist activities.

"I'd like to hike the peak," I say after introductions.

"It takes at least six hours," Repetto replies, "and we require you to go with two guides. I'm happy to arrange that. But there are other excursions you might like too." Among them: a fishing trip and a bird-watching outing to the nearby isle of Nightingale, home to rockhopper penguins and the endemic Tristan albatross. I ask about the island's nine-hole golf course, where hazards include chicken coops and gale-force winds that have been known to destroy large ships.

Repetto smiles. "Tristan people don't really play golf," she says, explaining the course was built for a homesick British administrator. She ends with a caveat I'll hear many islanders echo: "Everything here depends on the weather."

I decide to begin with an exploratory walk and head to the island's only road, a two-mile-long ribbon of gravel and broken pavement. The pastoral tableau of mountain and ocean before me evokes a blend of Scotland and Big Sur. I pass the golf course



the South Atlantic Ocean, roughly halfway between Buenos Aires, Argentina, and Cape Town, South Africa. There is no airport. There is no deep harbor. I reached the island aboard a South African polar research vessel, the S.A. *Agulhas II*, on one of only nine passages scheduled annually from Cape Town. The same ship will pick me up a month from now. Time at sea is seven days, each way.

Why travel to Tristan? Simple: to escape to a place that has eluded even like-minded escapists.

Certainly, no one could have prepared me for the arrival at the island. Though part of a small volcanic archipelago, Tristan da Cunha, upon our approach, looked solitary and lost, like an iceberg adrift. The island, essentially a 6,760-foot-high volcanic cone, is given shape by the vast negative space around it.

Today, stories and photos reach us from all corners of the globe, diminishing opportunities for true discovery. Even if



Volcanic slopes loom over fishing boats tied down for windy weather. Locals (opposite) tend to a lamb. Opening pages: A Tristanian and his dog survey the vast South Atlantic Ocean.



Playful marker, a signpost (above) certifies Tristan's distance from almost anywhere. Yellow-nosed albatrosses (below), named for the gold streaks on their bills, nest on the island. Tristan spiny lobsters (left), an endemic species, have found favor with diners as far away as Las Vegas.



and, just beyond it, come upon Hottentot Gulch, named after African soldiers who pitched their tents here in 1816, part of a British garrison that was dispatched to ward off American privateers and any Frenchmen bent on using Tristan as a staging post to rescue France's exiled emperor, Napoleon, who was imprisoned 1,343 miles north, on St. Helena Island.

I pass cows grazing beside Jenny's Watron (Jenny's stream), where a widow once dwelled, then stroll by Knockfolly Ridge, Bugsby Hole, and an eroded sea cliff called Hillpiece. I pledge to see Ridge-Where-the-Goat-Jump-Off and Pig Bite—landmarks commemorating notable local events—before I leave.

The road peters out at a mosaic of stonewalled plots overlooking the ocean, an area known as the Patches. Scattered about the farming plots are small cabins; during Christmas, Tristanians pack up and travel all of two miles from the settlement to enjoy a weeklong holiday here.

"Need a hand?" I call out to an older gentlemen standing with a pitchfork in the moist dirt of his potato patch.

"Suuuure," Anthony Green replies. "Just waitin' for the mis-sus to get back."

When the British military left Tristan in 1817—the attempt to rescue Napoleon never materialized—a Scottish corporal, William Glass, and two English stonemasons stayed behind. They built homes and boats from salvaged driftwood, then drafted a constitution decreeing a new community based on equality and cooperation. The collective spirit that sustained the island during years of almost complete isolation still exists.

I clamber over the volcanic rock wall that lines Green's plot, and he hands me a spare pitchfork. We dig shallow rows, then lay in spuds from a plastic bucket, along with fertilizer pellets. At surrounding plots, I see other families hard at work, laying crushed lobster shells and sheep's wool over their potatoes (everyone has a proven method). Some smile over at me with an approving nod.

"Tristanians consider potatoes as insurance," says Conrad Glass, a descendant of William Glass and the island's chief constable, a few days later. "If suddenly the world went crazy and money had no value, we'd still have our staple vegetable."

I'd eaten potatoes every night, boiled, baked, mashed, stuffed into a lamb shoulder and roasted, or made into "snislens," fried dough served with jams or combined with raisins to make a sweet pudding.

"Do you ever tire of potatoes?" I ask Green.

"No," he replies. "Thing about Tristan is, you always have enough potatoes."

THAT NIGHT AT THE ALBATROSS I discover that word has traveled about the tourist who helped Anthony Green plant potatoes. This earns me points, and at least one South African lager. I strain to pick up the Tristanian-English patois—an amalgam of languages that includes Afrikaans, Italian, and Americanisms such as "hey, buddy." One young man is "heyen on" in a singsong cadence with his "fardi" (godfather) about

collecting "jadda boys" (penguin eggs), his accent thickening as he becomes "half touch up" (wasted) after a few rounds.

"Come an' dance!" Desiree Repetto urges me, adding with a sly grin, "Someone's been askin' about you." The Saturday night dance is in full swing at one-story Prince Philip Hall, next to the Albatross. An 18-year-old deejay is serving up pop hits from the 1990s, but the dance floor is awkwardly empty, like at a junior high prom. Young men cluster around a gin bottle they smuggled out of the Albatross; the women are seated on a bench. The deejay begins spinning a pop song, then abruptly changes to a country-and-western tune. I watch the guys put down their drinks, swoop across the floor, and extend their hands to the ladies. Looking at me, Desiree nods toward a shy young woman, and I walk over to invite her to dance. She smiles, and soon we're shuffling along with the other couples. When the song ends, the floor clears once more. Later, as I head home under a starry sky, the music slowly fades to just the lonely rhythm of breaking surf—a reminder that Tristan exists all by itself.

"ENTER, ENTER," Gladys Lavarello urges as she waves to me from her front door. She lives down a curvy paved road with no signs, traffic lights, mailboxes, or even house numbers.

White-haired and squinting from behind thick glasses, she smiles warmly as she leads me into her living room, furnished with lace-draped armchairs and family photos. Like nearly

"I'VE LEFT TRISTAN FIVE TIMES IN MY LIFE, AND IT'S AS EMOTIONAL NOW AS THE FIRST TIME. YOU SUDDENLY REALIZE WHAT YOU'RE LEAVING BEHIND."



every Tristanian, Lavarello descends from a settler who washed ashore, in her case Gaetano Lavarello, her Italian grandfather, who shipwrecked on Tristan in 1892 with crewmate Andrea Repetto and stayed, coming to love the island's remoteness.

I'd been told that Lavarello knew all about the old times, and I wanted to hear how life on Tristan was before World War II, when islanders would row out into the ocean to wave down passing ships and barter for supplies.

"There wasn't any money," she says. "We didn't really know what it was! We depended on cattle and sheep and fishing."

Lavarello proceeds to speak warmly of island traditions that still exist—Old Year's Night, a year-end celebration when men dress in masks and scare the women; Ratting Day, a pest-control competition—and wistfully about ones that no longer take place, such as Happling Day, an annual outing to fetch apples at a now defunct orchard. She then tells me about the day in 1961 when boulders suddenly began tumbling down Queen Mary's Peak—and the ground split just beyond her house. For the first time, islanders learned that their mountain was an active volcano. Its eruption on October 8 caused the British government to evacuate all Tristanians to Southampton, England, for two years, where they quickly became media



Tristanian Harold Green holds a new family member: great-grandchild Natasha Williams.

sensations and were subjected to all manner of medical tests.

"How was that for you?" I ask.

"We all—well, nearly everybody—wanted to return to our own hisland," she exclaims, adding the Tristanian *h*.

Every day I find myself gazing up at Queen Mary's Peak, hoping for good weather; every day thick, ominous clouds

glower back at me. Then it happens: One morning I awake to a calm sea, partly cloudy skies, and light winds.

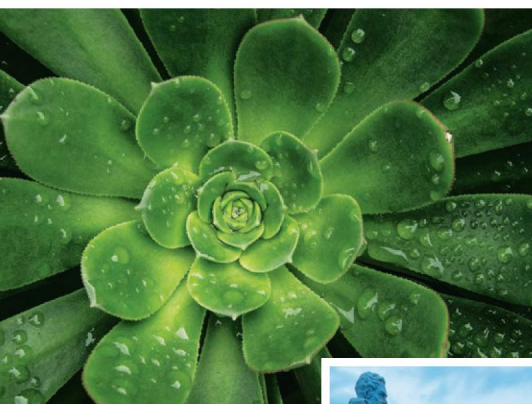
"Looks like a great day," I say to Peter Repetto, Desiree's father and my homestay host, a retiree who right now is padding about the front flower garden in his slippers.

"It's the lee that you're seeing," he says, nodding toward the flat water. Opposing winds have produced calm conditions, but they are temporary. Like most islanders, Repetto is a keen forecaster by necessity. Locals make their living from farming and fishing. Before he retired, Repetto ran the general store and trapped lobsters, the island's main export. He doesn't count on the good weather staying put.

For Tristanians, a great day means a fishing day. So when indicators look good one morning in the faint light

before dawn, a man begins hammering on an empty propane canister next to Prince Philip Hall—the alert that, after two weeks of dangerous seas, it's fishing time. Lights flick on inside houses as the settlement stirs. Soon men stream down to the harbor with rain slickers slung over shoulders and lunch pails in hand. In pairs, they board fishing boats loaded with lobster

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traps. It's business as usual, but watching them, I get a sense that this is what these men live for. The women, including my hostess, Patricia Repetto, will process the bounty in a new factory beside the harbor—whole lobsters for Japan, tails for the U.S. Of course, they keep some: I'll enjoy a delicious lobster curry for dinner that night.

Next door to the Repettos lives retired fisherman Ches Lavarello, for many years the island's top lobsterman. I ask him to take me fishing; he doesn't require much arm-twisting.

"Even if I don't catch a single fish, I stay out on the water for hours," he tells me as we reach an empty beach below Hottentot Gulch. "See these rocks?" he asks, gesturing offshore. "We'd come at night and catch sacks of spiny lobster here with a hand line and a scoop."

Lavarello is large framed, with a silver chain around his neck and tattoos on his arms. He hooks a bit of squid onto his line as bait and, with a well-practiced twist of his body, lobs the line into the water. He doesn't catch anything for a good while. Finally he feels a small tug—and ends up accumulating a respectable bucket of fish known as five fingers.

TWENTY-EIGHT DAYS after it transported me to Tristan, the S.A. *Agulhas II* returns. Not all of my Tristan ambitions have been fulfilled. I never bagged Queen Mary's Peak, though I did spend a day hiking a lush landscape of mosses, ferns, and nesting yellow-nosed albatrosses halfway up the mountain. I also attended two baptisms, a wedding reception, two birthday potlucks, a lamb-marking, and a distribution of the mail. But holding to a tourist checklist on Tristan was never the point.

On my last afternoon on the island, I visit the Café, next to Prince Philip Hall, which opens briefly in the afternoon. A handful of Tristanians sit around tables drinking white wine and soda. The talk focuses on the weather, fishing, the potato crop, and local gossip. Life here may not be free from care—the island now is more connected to the world—but it is simpler. Yes, I've had Internet chats with friends back home. And Tristan's lobsters are appearing on dinner plates in Las Vegas and Tokyo. Yet my time here has transpired in some kind of bubble. On Tristan, your camera won't be stolen. You won't hear a cellphone ring. And if you fall down drunk or, say, get hurt crashing your bike, someone will help you get home; everyone will know where you live.

Desiree Repetto walks me down to a grassy patch by the schoolhouse. Much of Tristan has gathered here to see off friends and visitors. A 21-year-old is departing the island for the first time, to take a scuba course in Cape Town (his mother has never set foot off Tristan); Conrad Glass, the constable, is headed to England for training.

"I've left Tristan five times in my life," he says, "and it's just as emotional now as the first time. You suddenly realize what you're leaving behind."

I think I know what he means. Tristan may no longer be isolated—cruise ships have discovered it—but it's still insulated. To travel to a place like this today, even with nary a palm tree in sight, is to experience a vanishing kind of paradise.

Writer/photographer **ANDY ISAACSON** lives on what may be the world's least remote island, Long Island, New York.



Focal length: 16mm Exposure: F/16 6.0 sec ISO100 © Ian Plant



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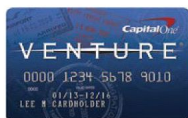
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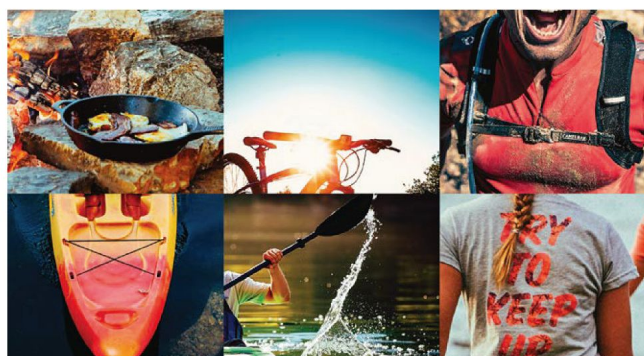


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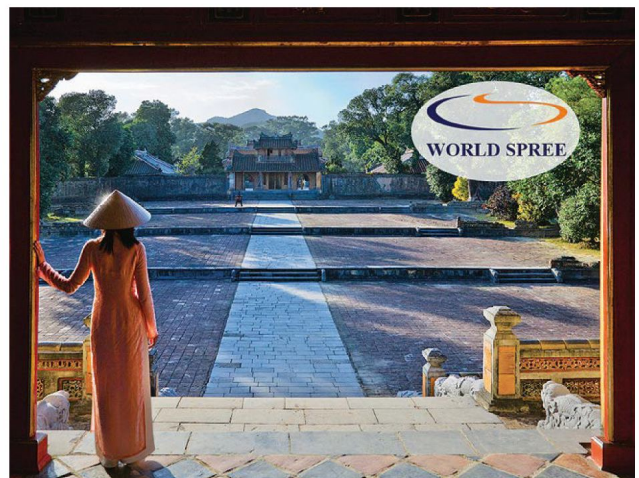


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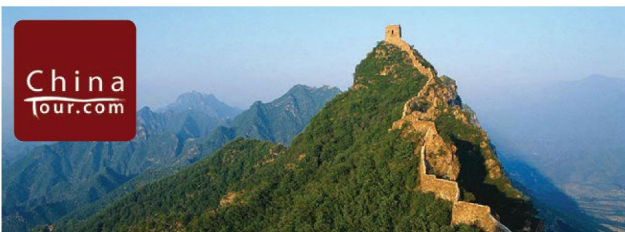


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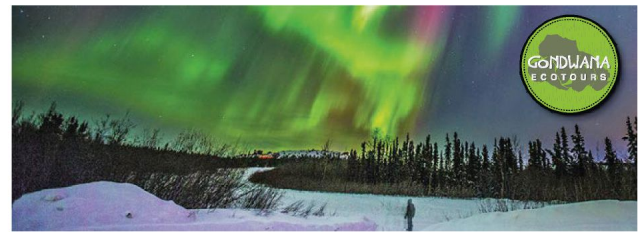
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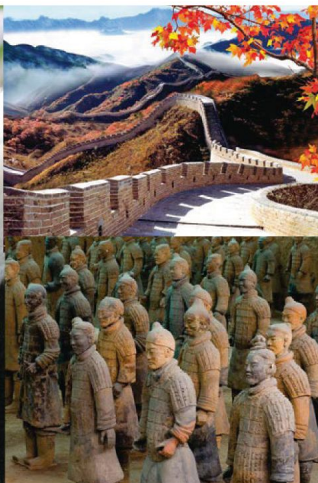
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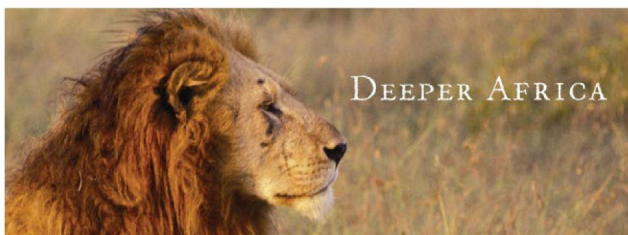


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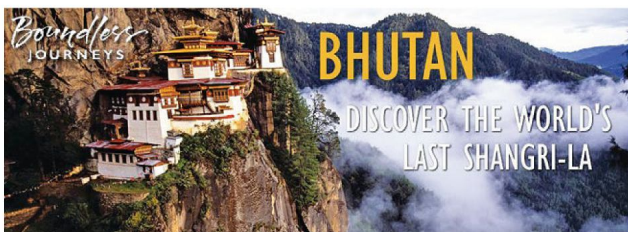
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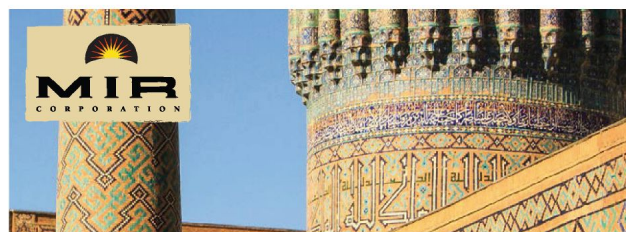
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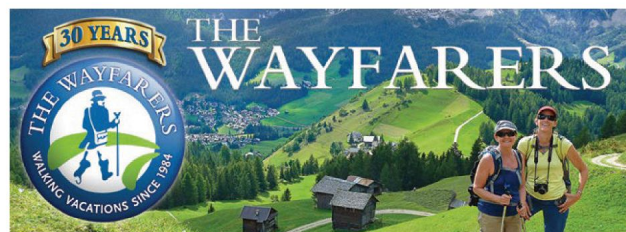
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4. THE POET VIRGIL ALLEGEDLY HID AN EGG IN THE FOUNDATION OF CASTEL DELL'OVO, THE OLDEST CASTLE IN WHAT ITALIAN CITY?



5. PUFFER FISH ARE A DANGEROUS DELICACY—THEIR LIVERS CONTAIN ENOUGH TOXIN TO KILL FIVE PEOPLE—KNOWN BY WHAT NAME IN JAPAN?



6. THE FAMOUS ORIENT EXPRESS RAILWAY BEGAN SERVICE BETWEEN WHAT TWO CITIES IN 1889?



7. NAME THE BAVARIAN MONARCH WHOSE 19TH-CENTURY NEUSCHWANSTEIN CASTLE STANDS AS A TOTEM TO MEDIEVAL-INSPIRED EXTRAVAGANCE.



8. THE WILLIAMSTOWN THEATER FEST RUNS IN SUMMER AMID WHAT MOUNTAIN RANGE IN WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS?



9. NUBIAN PYRAMIDS MARK THE SITE OF MEROË, AN ANCIENT CITY LOCATED ALONG THE NILE IN WHAT NATION?

ANSWERS 1. Salzburg 2. Yuma 3. Jeju 4. Naples 5. Fugu 6. Paris and Constantinople 7. King Ludwig II 8. Berkshires 9. Sudan

IMAGE SOURCE/CORBIS (SAILBOAT), LABORANT/SHUTTERSTOCK (SUNGASSES), LIMPIDO/STOCKPHOTO (SKY), RANGIZZ/SHUTTERSTOCK (EGG), NORBERT WUJSCIENCE FACTION/CORBIS (FISH), LABORANT/SHUTTERSTOCK (TRAIN), 2/HANS-PETER MERTEN/OCEAN/CORBIS (CASTLE), SINOPIC/GETTY IMAGES (CURTAIN), MICHAEL FREEMAN/CORBIS (CAMEL)

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